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A Journey Through  
Wilderness Weekend Experiences

by  
Thomas G. Potter



A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Physical Education and Sport Studies

The University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Fall, 1993





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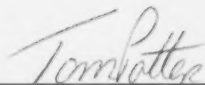
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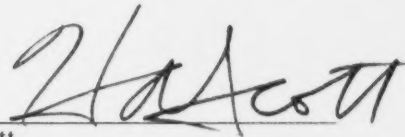
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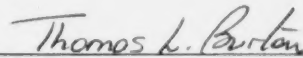
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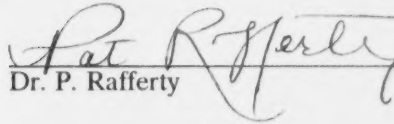
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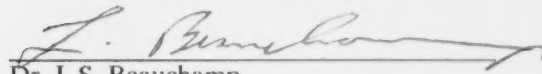
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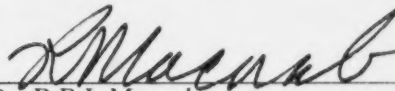
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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, BETTY ANN VIVIAN POTTER, who loved life and taught me to live and appreciate each and every day as a special and meaningful gift. Happiest being active in the out-of-doors, mom recognized and valued the importance of nature and our humility within it. Freedom with responsibility was a core value of mom's. Teaching me the true meaning of life, mom lived to enrich the lives of others. An influential role model, Betty was a true friend who inspired me to pursue my interests, and gave me the courage and confidence to risk, be myself, and set my goals and aspirations on nothing less than the summit. This thesis is just one of the many personal growth journeys she consistently encouraged me to travel. Thank you mom, for your inspiration, confidence and unconditional love. Your journey is now mine to continue; let us travel it together.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the socio-psychological and socio-cultural impacts and lived experiences of wilderness weekend journeys from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. The quantitative study compared the experiences of two groups of students (n=28) participating in separate weekend wilderness canoe trips as part of an introductory outdoor education course at the University of Alberta. Using pre- and post-test questionnaires this study examined the extent to which curriculum elements, such as cooperative games and programmed reflection, influenced interpersonal feelings of closeness among group members. It also attempted to determine if emotions toward self, others and the trip components differed across experiences. While both groups showed significant positive changes, the study found few significant differences between the groups. The qualitative portion of the investigation used ethnographic and phenomenological methods to explore the meanings of one of the wilderness weekend trips for five students and provided rich descriptions of the ramifications brief wilderness trips can have on students. The most prevalent and meaningful thread through out the journey was the unexpected and powerful negotiation of a new social reality in wilderness and how the impacts of this negotiation affected the self and constituted the other. The students'

common themes discovered included: appreciation of and connectedness to the natural environment, personal calming--solitude, coping with the challenge, heightened personal awareness, perceived threats to personal well-being, change in emotions, disclosure of selves, closeness to others through shared common experience, uncovering real others, and cooperation. Findings strongly supported the notion that a well led wilderness weekend trip with a large group can amplify participants' intra- and interpersonal growth and can have a profound impact upon them. Additionally, the findings of the study also contributed to elaboration of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model. This model was designed to assist outdoor educators to help students attain maximal intra- and interpersonal growth during short-term wilderness programmes accommodating large numbers of students. It is theorized that, through the use of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, learning outcomes and growth gained during and after a wilderness programme can be amplified.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I summit the peak of this academic journey the lofty heights of other mountains beckon me further. But before I can embark on these quests I need to acknowledge the influence of friends who have taught, supported and inspired me along the way. I wish to express my thanks and sincere gratitude:

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## CHAPTER I

## MY JOURNEY DAWNS--MY VISION QUEST

My Journey Begins

This was a personal journey of many paths, few ever trodden. During this journey I took and processed countless intellectual pictures and left behind a myriad of footprints; fresh and deep impressions of cognitive understandings and affective realizations of myself, my trail companions, my students and whomever else may choose to travel this way.

This journey beckoned to me for over two decades. It gnawed away in the depths of my consciousness, challenging me towards further understandings; impelling me to travel Robert Frost's "Road Not Taken." As I embarked on this personal vision quest, I did so knowing that my life would never again be the same. For as Frost (1971, p. 223) affirmed, "knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I shall ever come back." Why? Because during my journey I knew that I would grow and change. The me at the trail-head would not be the same me, come trail's-end. The way in which I viewed myself, the meanings I assigned to objects, the goals I set for my outdoor courses, the methodologies of which I made use, and most importantly, the way in which I

helped my students make sense of and ascribe meaning to their wilderness experiences, would all metamorphose. The lens through which I viewed my world would be modified, as the personal understandings gained from this journey guided me toward becoming a more complete being, a teacher who is more sensitive towards students' needs, and, an educator who can more effectively empower students to grow toward their goals and encourage them to fulfill their dreams.

And so, realizing that this intellectual journey was but one way, I embarked with anxious enthusiasm. I was propelled forward through an instinctive drive for challenge, understanding and self-actualization, yet I was anxious of where my trails may lead. Questions sprang to mind. Do I have the necessary theoretical skills to complete this journey? Will I recognize the hidden methodological dangers that lie ahead? Can I deal with them when they cross my paths? Do I have the knowledge to improvise if I am caught short? I did not have an accurate map of where I was venturing because no one had ever travelled this journey before. Yet, through years of experience I felt that I could navigate myself through the forests and over the mountains that lay ahead. But I did not know where the trails may lead me. Nor did I know when to follow existing paths and when to forge through the woods where no trails lay. These were questions and challenges



which would have to be answered and resolved over time.

Unsure of my destination, the many questions and anxieties filled my head. Some of these included; How will I know when I have arrived? Where will it be? Or, will I ever arrive at a point where I feel satisfied in ending my quest? Will I ever be content not knowing what lies over the next horizon? Perhaps my insatiable quest for knowledge and experiences will lead me on a life-long journey, forever in search of distant horizons to gain new understandings. What an adventure of exploration, so many unknowns of boundless possibilities, so much uncertainty. And so

...I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and I

I took the one less travelled by,

And that has made all the difference

(Frost, 1971, p. 223).

The prelude to this journey began when I was a boy. As a young child I was drawn to the Canadian Shield lakes and into the hardwood forests of Quebec. Here, among the waves and towering trees was my magical playground, my refuge where I felt whole, a haven where my imagination soared with the clouds. Playing a pirate on a stormy sea or pretending to be an Abenaki Indian stalking deer, I was in control of

my cast of characters. I could just be me--I was free. My dog and I would hunt frogs, hike endless miles, and pass timeless hours in our boat. To me this was a life rich with meaning.

The time I spent in wilderness, experiencing its interconnected celebration of life, allowed me to view the world and my own life from an increasingly rare and important perspective. I learned to understand my life based on what had meaning to me. For me, wilderness was, (and is), a metaphor for freedom. Wilderness allowed me to experience life in ways not possible in my over-determined, structured everyday life. For example, my younger elementary and high-school days were spent between the walls of a traditional English-style private boys' school. Here, I found it difficult to be me; I was simply one of a class of 27 robotic-like boys performing to the strict, repressive commands of our teachers. Sawed off goalie sticks or horse-whip handles for "whackers" accompanied the educators from class to class, year after year. In fact, they seemed to take pleasure in "teaching" through fear, and regularly made examples of us at the front of the class. Our spit-polished, everyday formal uniforms promoted conformity and obedience, from a standard school tie to grey flannelled pants, sock colour, hair length, identical winter tuques and even the white coats we wore when waiting on tables at

lunch; few allowances were made for individual choice. In class, during my earlier years, we either all had to have our jackets on or off; and, each morning we stood at attention before marching off to class. In my high-school graduation yearbook I wrote, "Everyone wants me to be just like them; and, all I want to do is be me." I was crying for self-expression. I was tired of playing an acquiescent role; my "self" struggled to emerge. It was in wilderness that my "self" was set free and flourished. Now, almost two decades later, it is quite obvious to me why, over the years, the meaning and intrinsic value of wilderness has grown for me. As a youngster, wilderness excited and stimulated me--in wilderness I felt whole; I could be me. Wilderness helped my life take on new meaning and direction. I questioned many everyday life values, all the while emphatically believing that my direction, my goals and my vision were right for me. With wilderness my life made sense--my quest was real.

Through my childhood outdoor experiences I gained an immense respect for wilderness and a strong appreciation for its magical qualities. Growing up at our family cottage and participating in outdoor activities with others, through cubs, scouts and summer camps, beliefs of the values of wilderness unknowingly developed into personal needs. For as time passed and I matured, I learned that I required time

in wilderness to maintain a happy and healthy lifestyle. Through my teenage years this appreciation for wilderness led me to numerous summer jobs at camps and clubs as well as on a plethora of personal wilderness trips.

During my years of leading children in wilderness environments, I discovered that living and travelling in wilderness was not only empowering for me but for them as well. The experiences of sharing wilderness with youth kindled my curiosity and led me to wonder what it was that was so magical about our time spent together? What was it that kept bringing me and others back to the wilds, often at the expense of large personal sacrifices.

After completing both undergraduate and graduate degrees in physical education at McGill University, I was fortunate enough to secure employment teaching outdoor experiential education at the college and university levels. The majority of my courses would spend about six weeks on campus before venturing out into the wilderness for a weekend of adventure. These on-campus classes were typically uneventful, where students acquired the requisite skills and knowledge necessary for safe and enjoyable outdoor journeys. It was my belief that these sessions, while essential, provided little personal meaning for most students, especially relative to their upcoming journeys.

In the main, the students were both anxious and excited at the prospect of going on a weekend adventure. However, many of them also viewed it as a disruption in their personal lives and yet another academic hoop through which to leap.

In spite of this, once the trips were under way, my students seemed to undergo a potent transition. Cares usually dropped away like autumn leaves, masks were shed and individuals began to unite. The social atmosphere changed; the ways in which people viewed themselves, others and the environment altered. A magic seemed to fill the wilderness air. An ordinary class of students, many socially inhibited, invariably melded into a cohesive and trusting group. Living proof of this dramatic transformation was consistently demonstrated to me on Sunday nights during our drive back to Montreal. A gaze into the rear-view mirror, while I was driving, would dependably reveal students slumbering arm in arm, heads often resting on neighbours' shoulders. This was a group that only days before was just another class on campus. Something had changed. But what, how, and why? Then, weeks after each trip, I would often receive a student's trip journal that declared, "This had been the best weekend of my life." My life! The best weekend of my life! But, I had hardly done anything spectacular with these groups. And we had only been gone for a weekend-- barely 50 hours. These words, "the best

weekend of my life", would ring in my ears long after my trips were over. My students' powerful reactions would haunt me as I wrestled with their meaning, trying desperately to figure out how and why they had undergone such a powerful personal experience.

### My Questions

As an outdoor instructor, these feelings of success with groups were naturally extremely motivating and satisfying. But the questions of how and why these vigorous intra- and interpersonal transformations were occurring filled my consciousness long after those long Sunday night drives back to our urban lives. What was it about these short trips that created such meaningful learning experiences for students? What did these weekend journeys really mean to them? What was it that was so important to them? Was it the teaching methodologies I was employing? Was it the natural environment, or perhaps a combination of the two? Perhaps neither? How could I construct future wilderness journeys to further enrich the students' experience? How could I help them to make sense of their weekend?

Filled with more questions than answers about the nature of human experience in wilderness, I decided to



formally pursue my questions. Again enrolled in graduate school, this time in the Canadian West, I dove into the related literature. I discovered a multitude of studies that have investigated changes in people's levels of self-concept through their participation in outdoor adventure experiences (Ewert, 1983a). To no surprise, the literature discloses that positive alterations in self-concept have been substantiated through properly structured outdoor adventure programmes (Ewert, 1983a, 1983b; Hendee & Brown, 1987, 1988; Richards, 1977; Vogel, 1988). However, I have found little research that examines general indicators of personal growth in outdoor adventure experiences (Gibson, 1979; Hendee & Brown, 1987; Wood & Cheffers, 1978). Furthermore, few outdoor studies, with the exception of those of Gibson (1977) and Benson (1991), examine the effects of various humanistic instructional processes and curriculum elements, such as cooperative games, self-disclosure, sharing circles and formal team building on enhancing participants' personal growth. The majority of outdoor practitioners seem to focus on skill acquisition in the out-of-doors and appear to assume that the human skills will grow independently. Acknowledging this phenomenon, Godfrey (1972) stated that,

[Outdoor] staff should put at least equal energy into developing a facilitative atmosphere for productive interaction between participants as they do in

organizing sessions of rock climbing and rappelling.

The further I hiked the trail of researching the human side of outdoor education, the more focused my study became. I was excited when I realized that few researchers have travelled this way. Most scholars on the outdoor track have taken the well travelled trail of studying self-concept. As Frost (1971, p. 223) so poetically depicted, the path I wandered "was grassy and wanted wear.... And be one traveller, long I stood; And looked down one as far as I could, to where it bent in the undergrowth;" and I became electrified as I fathomed the journey that lay ahead of me. Questions that have clouded my mind for years, leading to un-summitted peaks and distant valleys, emerged with vivid clarity.

#### Nature and Scope of the Problem

Many outdoor educators believe that personal growth may be readily attained through an open, encouraging and trusting social environment. Other outdoor leaders subscribe to more traditional forms of outdoor education, allowing the process of personal growth to develop without intervention. An example of the latter approach relates to a former Outward Bound philosophy of "let the mountains speak for themselves." This approach advocates leaders to



provide followers with the physical outdoor experience and does not encourage inner reflection or programmed processing of the experience. Conversely, Benson (1981), W.G. Gibson (1977), Katz, (1973), Schoel et al. (1988) and Stremba (1989) argue that reflecting on and communicating openly about the experience contributes to the enhancement of self-concept, personal awareness and, ultimately, growth. Furthermore, Coutts (1980) reported that the ability to communicate and understand others in a wilderness environment was the major benefit perceived by the participants of a researched outdoor leadership programme.

Based on previous research (Benson, 1981, 1991; Gass, 1990; W.G. Gibson, 1977; Horwood, 1989; Johnson, 1990; Johnson & Johnson, 1982; Jourard, 1964, 1971; Jourard & Landsman, 1980; Knapp, 1990; Koziey, 1987; Maslow, 1968; Schoel et al., 1988; Schutz, 1967, 1989; Stremba, 1989; Stringer & McAvoy, 1992; Wichmann, 1991 & Zander, 1982) it is believed that group bonding curriculum elements, such as cooperative games and programmed reflection, accelerate and strengthen the "magical" intrapersonal and interpersonal growth found during an outdoor experience. It was a purpose of this investigation to examine this belief with a large group over a brief period of time in wilderness and to identify specific curricula and instructional content and processes that enhance this phenomenon.

The outdoor-related research almost exclusively investigates small group outdoor experiences ( $n < 16$ ) of more than five days duration. In fact, the majority of research examines trips that are a minimum of one week in length, while many studies research outdoor trips of up to three weeks or more in duration. Little research has dealt with trips of three days or fewer. Ironically, for logistical and financial reasons, the vast majority of institutions are unable to extend their outdoor experiences past three days and two nights and have to cope with the reality of large groups. With this in mind, many education professionals question the value and cost benefits of a brief wilderness experience.

Additionally, many outdoor educators believe that one, two and even three week trips are necessary in order to achieve significant personal growth. While perhaps these longer experiences are ideal, most institutions do not have the resources, the time or the commitment to education in the out-of-doors through extended field trips. Therefore, an additional purpose of this investigation is to study how maximum benefits and growth may be attained through the more practically viable weekend wilderness trips and ascertain the value and meaning students ascribe to such experiences.

### Need for the Study

Many North Americans are becoming more self-conscious about and demanding of how they spend their leisure time. They are demonstrating a greater awareness towards self-improvement, increased physical fitness, family and community activities (Kelly, 1982). Concurrent with the present health and fitness boom has been a dramatic rise in interest and participation in outdoor leisure pursuits. This movement has been met with the expansion and development of institutions offering outdoor skill acquisition programmes and courses. For example, Ewert (1983a, 1989) reported large increases in participation rates in outdoor leisure pursuits such as camping, hiking and hang gliding. Hale (1978) noted that as early as 1975 there were over 200 colleges and universities offering courses or degrees in outdoor adventure pursuits. Ten years later, Ewert (1985) described an even greater interest than Hale in outdoor adventure education among universities and colleges. Hendee (1987) reported that with the addition of environmental and adventure programmes there are approximately 12,000 outdoor programmes and 25,000 professionals involved in outdoor education in North America.

While the major focus of these outdoor programmes is on

the leisure experience (Gass, 1990), the goals of these programmes are as wide and varied as the field itself. For example, a wide spectrum of teachings has been applied through the various forms of outdoor education, including camp craft, arithmetic, friendship choices, skill acquisition, and religion, to identify a few. Hammerman (1973) summed up this breadth and ambiguity of outdoor education in stating that,

No one goal or single set of objectives has governed the way in which outdoor education had developed. The conservationist, the recreation leader, the scientist and the classroom teacher have a variety of reasons for working with youth in the outdoors.

As noted by Benson (1981), the broad focus of outdoor education encompasses the gaining of knowledge and outdoor skill development, such as canoeing and backpacking, in order to further personal development of self-concept, self-awareness and leadership abilities. With the profusion of goals and functions that outdoor education may accomplish, it is not surprising that so many individuals, groups and institutions are taking advantage of it as an effective means to attain their various goals (Benson).

Traditionally most institutions offering education through an outdoor setting focused primarily on physical

skill acquisition such as canoe paddling or navigating. These skills are straight forward to teach and enjoyable for the participants as well as providing important life skills for future pursuit in the activity. However, organizations that solely subscribe to the philosophy of psychomotor skill acquisition fail to grasp the opportunity of perhaps the most significant and worthwhile purpose of the outdoor experience--the empowerment of self and the magnification of personal awareness and interpersonal skill development. Intuitively and sensitively led, the outdoor experience has the potential to connect participants to higher senses of values, meanings and purposes in their lives (Hendee & Brown, 1988). I believe that through specific methodological processes much of this personal growth and development is attainable during short excursions accommodating large groups. The present study contributes to leadership development in this area through the formation of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model.

While a great deal of research has been conducted in group dynamics, interpersonal relations and personal growth over the past fifty years, until recently, little progress has been made in the application of this knowledge (Zander, 1982). This is often because practitioners rarely pay attention to the research findings. As well, research

recommendations are often not conducive to practical application (Zander).

To this end, a critical need exists to further understand one of the most dynamic forms of education-- education through wilderness adventure. According to Ewert (1983a), a multitude of statistical studies of outdoor programmes have been done, but little research exists linking programme components to programme outcomes. Surprisingly, the specific effects of course design upon outcomes remain virtually unknown. In my opinion, the meaning of the students' experiences must be better understood in order to facilitate programme modifications aimed at nurturing a more positive and lasting growth experience. Therefore, the content and processes required to foster personal growth, and thereby amplify the potential power of the outdoor education experience, must be identified.

This research assists practitioners in a wide variety of educational, social and environmental milieus to obtain optimal growth through their short-term wilderness programmes with large numbers of students. As well, this research provides sceptical education professionals with necessary information to better assess the values, meanings and cost benefits of brief outdoor experiences.



### Nature of the Study

Presently, the knowledge I seek through this exploratory journey lies distant; much territory awaits to be investigated. The horizons, while remote, lure me onward. I must travel lightly, tread gently and remain open and sensitive to grasp the teachings that await me. I must become acclimatized to search for knowledge in all places; to take notice of everything and search for meaning with each object that I encounter. I must unearth the organic layers of the forest floors and climb tall trees to find what is elusive from below; I must remain awake through a starry night, for the darkness may reveal what remains evasive during the daylight. Many mountains must be ascended to gain knowledge from their lofty perspectives. I must view the land from as many stances as possible--always remaining open and perceptive to what I may see, hear, smell, taste and feel. It is only in this way that I may learn from the land's teachings and begin to understand humans' relationships with it and experiences in it.

My basic need of this journey was to gain a more complete understanding of the meanings students ascribe to a large group wilderness journeys of short duration. To seek what these types of experiences mean to them. To learn what students bring to wilderness and what they take away from



wilderness. Additionally, to identify the varying content and processes of the teaching methodologies that influenced the students intra- and interpersonal growth. As well, I wished to further develop my Wilderness Personal Growth Model. This model synthesises previous outdoor education research as well as my extensive experience in the teaching of outdoor education and is an expression of my personal philosophy for nurturing maximal intra- and interpersonal growth during wilderness trips. The model is based on the concept that students' growth in wilderness is contingent upon their re-negotiation of their social reality in wilderness.

In order to search these unknowns, data were collected and viewed from several perspectives. A qualitative and quantitative triangulation approach was used, including pre- and post-questionnaires, personal interviews, participant journals and participant observations. Triangulation is the use of multiple methods in the study of the same phenomenon (Berg, 1989; Denzin, 1978; Mathison, 1988). As in navigation, each bearing or methodological technique is a unique line of sight aimed to converge at the same point. Denzin (1978, p. 302) pointed out that through triangulation "the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another." Like following separate paths through a forest, nature may be viewed and experienced through various

perspectives, allowing one to better understand the forest as a whole and not simply through one route. With each method revealing slightly different aspects of the same phenomena, triangulation is a useful strategy for increasing the validity and evaluation of research findings (Mathison, 1988).

Quantitative and qualitative methods can be used together to be a valuable and useful approach to research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Together, the two methods can cover the full spectrum of investigation and effectively cast light on different aspects of the same phenomena (Berg, 1989). However, while they can compliment one another, it is important to empathize with the difficulties the two fundamentally different methodologies and philosophies present to a researcher when used collectively. In this study, while I found the use of the two strategies enlightening, I also found the bilaterally methodological journey of triangulating fraught with perils. Through my research each method would frequently beckon me down its particular path, usually at the expense of the other. I continually struggled with the best way in which to capitalize on the strengths of each method and simultaneously, delicately marry the two antithetical philosophies. And so, the journey I travelled began exploring wilderness weekend trips through both distinct

methodological paths and concluded with the sensitive, yet meaningful, task of converging the results of the two research techniques. While a perpetually challenging and difficult journey, I know that their union is stronger than the sum of their parts.

In the study two intact groups (a standard-programme group and an enriched-programme group) were quantitatively compared with pre- and post-questionnaires (Appendix B). The positivist methodological comparison attempted to determine whether specific treatment effects (such as cooperative games and programmed reflection) influenced students' levels of intra- and interpersonal growth. The main differences between the groups were that far more cooperative games and formal reflective exercises (such as sharing circles) were provided to the "enriched-programme" group compared to the more "standard-programme" group. Other than the differences in the treatment effects, both groups participated in weekend canoe trips that were as identical as possible. The canoe route, campsites, and the number of students per trip ( $n=28$ ) all remained consistent between groups, as well as the two experienced and skilled leaders. The trips took place on consecutive weekends, with the standard group embarking on their journey a week before the enriched-programmed group.

A pre-test questionnaire (Appendix B) was administered on the Friday of each of the trips to determine the students' receptivity towards the trip, their fears, expectations, objectives and feelings of closeness towards one another. A similar self-rating outdoor instrument, utilized as a post-test questionnaire (Appendix B), was administered to reflect the trips' impact on intrapersonal growth and the strength of interpersonal relations. Through this instrument students also identified the contents and processes of the outdoor course which they perceived to have contributed to their personal growth. This post-questionnaire was administered during the respective groups' laboratory session, 20 to 40 hours after each groups' canoe-camping trip. Students were also asked to respond to a list of questions in their journals (Appendix C) and hand these in at the culmination of their weekend trip.

Additionally, five volunteer students from the enriched-programme group were chosen to assist as co-researchers in a more in-depth investigation. These students were interviewed on several occasions and their trip journals were judiciously examined. Furthermore, in order to understand the students' experience first hand and gain their perspectives of the experience, I joined their journey as a participant observer. A combination of the aforementioned methods were used to effectively explore,

describe and seek out the meanings of the students' outdoor weekend lived experience. It sought to study the "contextualized" meaning of wilderness weekend programmes by taking a wholistic approach. Here, responses from the self were encouraged rather than from the more popular and familiar role-directed other. During the trips student decision making was fostered in hope that better insights to the self would emerge.

It must be noted that this study does not present the whole picture of group experiences in wilderness. It is limited to weekend experiences, hence the expectations of the growth obtained and change demonstrated through such a brief time frame should be reasonable. During brief excursions of two or three days it is plausible to undergo a positive experience with little emphasis on group skills. However, for trips of greater duration an emphasis on group dynamics becomes vital in order to foster optimal growth experiences. A short term wilderness journey can perhaps be compared to a honeymoon, where the atmosphere is usually so potent and valued that differences of opinion and conflicts rarely have time to emerge. But, given a longer duration, interpersonal conflicts will surface and must be dealt with effectively.

### The Journey's Theoretical Perspective

As I travelled the trails of knowledge, searching to better understand the meaning and relationship of wilderness adventure and human experience, I sensed that one footpath in particular may aid my quest. This trail, while remote and seldom travelled by wilderness adventurers, beckoned exploration. This trail is the footpath of symbolic interaction.

For Denzin (1973) society is constructed in the process of the interactions between and among its members. These interactions are based upon negotiated meanings within a society or culture. Symbolic interaction views meaning as occurring within the process of interaction between group members, where human beings tend to perceive themselves and act on the basis of how they believe other people feel about them and how other people behave towards them (Blumer, 1969). The meaning of an object for an individual emerges from the ways in which he or she and others act toward that object. In this regard an object does necessarily mean a concrete object but is more broadly defined to also include objects of thought, symbols, emotions or anything else humans make reference to. Here, the actions or reactions of others operate to help define and/or redefine the meaning of an object for an individual. Therefore, "symbolic



interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact" (Blumer, 1969, p.5). However, the use of these meanings by the person involves an interpretative process, an interpretation of the action. This interpretation involves a formative process whereby the individual selects, checks, suspends, regroups and transforms the meanings of an experience in light of the situation in which they are placed. Therefore, the meaning of an object is formed through a process of both interpersonal and self-interaction where individuals act toward an object according to the meaning that the object or situation has toward them. With this in mind it becomes crucial to grasp the meanings an individual or group assigns to objects in a particular environment in order to understand their subsequent actions, thoughts, emotions, interpersonal relations and ultimately their experiences.

Individuals' everyday lives are an ordered reality, an objectified world that is constituted by an order of objects that have been designated and understood as objects. These objects have pre-negotiated meanings for people living in a particular world. There is order in this reality which makes sense to the inhabitants (Berger and Luckman, 1966). In most situations, in which people act toward objects and one another, they have previous experience and an



understanding of how to act and of how others will act towards them. A culture, therefore, shares common and pre-established meanings of what is expected of peoples' actions. In such everyday life situations, individuals are able to direct their own behaviour by previously conceived meanings (Blumer, 1969). However, in novel situations, such as in wilderness, there are few pre-established meanings for urban dwellers. As a result, neophyte members of a wilderness group find many of their existing cultural rules, values and norms inadequate to deal with their situation. An inexperienced group embarking on a wilderness journey must therefore re-negotiate old or construct new cultural rules and actions that are more appropriate for their newly lived experience.

In a group situation, as seen by Blumer (1969), social interaction is a process that molds and influences human conduct. During interaction people must take into account what others are doing or are about to do. Individuals are forced to handle themselves according to what they perceive, interpret and judge from others and fit their actions in some way into the actions of others. Group life, therefore, is a dynamic process in which objects are constantly being created, affirmed, reconstructed and discarded by its members. Objects' meanings and peoples' actions toward them are altered in line with the changes that take place in a

particular world. Through symbolic interaction human group life is an ongoing, ever changing operation. It is filled with the fitting of personal behaviours to those of others through a dual process of negotiation and interpretation (Blumer, 1969). This continual process of negotiation sustains established patterns of joint conduct while also making them available to change. Thus established patterns of group life do not persist without recurrent affirmation of their meanings. If the interpretations that sustain these patterns are disrupted, such as a shift in context or life-worlds (urban to wilderness), the previously negotiated and agreed upon patterns will collapse and be replaced by new patterns. "It is the social process in group life that upholds the rules, not the rules that create and uphold group life" (Blumer, 1969, p. 19). Therefore, patterns of behaviour are dependent upon how individuals interpret meaning towards objects. During a group experience, especially a novel experience, individuals regularly redefine other's acts which, consequently, lead to new objects, new conceptions, new relations and new behaviours (Blumer, 1969).

Mead believed that the fundamental way in which group action takes place is through the fitting together of individual lines of actions. Each group member orders their actions to the on-going actions of others through their

interpretation of meaning of the other's acts. The actions of group members become the context in which individuals' own constituted or developing acts must fit. Group life, therefore, consists of individuals guiding their own actions in relation to and in negotiation with others to meet the situations in which the group is placed (Blumer, 1969). Therefore, the way in which group members express their expectations, fears, demands and instructions must be taken into account by individuals developing their own acts. This stance helps us to understand individual actions and group negotiations that take place in wilderness. It allows the participants' personal stock of knowledge to be used and encourages individuals to experience their weekend in wilderness as a negotiated, cooperative experience.

The interpretation of everyday common-sense knowledge is based upon one's own experiences as well as those handed down to us by parents, teachers and significant others. This acquired knowledge base, according to Schutz (1973), forms one's "knowledge at hand." It is through this knowledge that individuals ascribe meaning to objects in our life-world. People understand that their world is a world of well circumscribed objects with definite qualities, objects among which they move, which resist them and upon which they may act (Schutz, 1973). The way in which people act upon these objects is influenced by one's knowledge at

hand, one's biographical situation, and the environment, as well as through social interaction.

### Organization of the Study

This journey through a wilderness weekend experience has been organized into nine chapters. Chapter I introduced the reader to my perspectives and the research questions, outlined the need for the study and presented the study's theoretical perspective. Chapter II provides a brief overview of the literature related to understanding the challenges of learning and growing through wilderness experiences. Additionally, it reviews research in other related areas. Chapter III includes an ethnographic description of the researched wilderness journey. Programme details of the groups' trips follow. Chapter IV contains the positivistic portion of the investigation, a comparative study of two similar journeys, and presents the results. An interpretation of the data and a discussion of these results follow. Chapter V furnishes a rationale for the human science approach. The qualitative portions of the investigation are outlined, co-researchers are introduced, methods and procedures are described, and, validity and reliability of the study are discussed. Additionally, my personal biases are presented. Syntheses of the co-researchers' paths are described in Chapter VI. Chapter VII

provides an understanding of the paths the co-researchers shared on their journey; a discussion of common themes that were prevalent among each of the co-researchers' protocols follow. Chapter VIII presents my Wilderness Personal Growth Model. The final chapter, Chapter IX, summarizes the research, addresses the practical implications of the study for wilderness leaders and presents recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER II

## A JOURNEY THROUGH RELATED LITERATURE

The Trails Diverge

The trails of literature related to this study are diverse. Once into the forest they branch away, cross, fade and reappear, characteristic of web-like caribou trails on the open tundra. Some tracks lead to lakes and valleys, others cross vast meadows to distant frontiers, while some climb an array of peaks. Many trails are eroded with wear; exposed roots and rocks attest to the multitude of travellers who have passed their way. Other paths are less frequented; while some remain barely discernable to even the most experienced tracker. I traversed these trails on a long and arduous, but fascinating, journey. Some paths of inquiry faded in dense thickets, forcing me to turn back and choose another route. Others, pointing to never ending possibilities, forked in various directions, obliging me to make difficult decisions on which to explore. Many led to magnificent vistas of meaningful knowledge, peaks where I could remain for hours to absorb the panorama. All trails, however, whether narrow, wide, muddy or grass-covered, provided me with further understandings on which I could build a more complete mental map of my research area.

During my journey through related literature, in pursuit of others' trails, I discovered that no one has roamed where I wished to venture. I did find a solitary path related to weekend wilderness experience, although this trail led to studies of changes in locus of control and self-esteem with handicapped adolescents. Besides this trail, I could not find a single path of research investigating weekend types of wilderness excursions. Additionally, I failed to locate any research tracks exploring the meaning of large group wilderness experiences. In light of this vacuum of wilderness research, I have attempted to describe the most meaningful, related literature trails over which I have travelled. I began my intellectual journey through related literature on a well worn road and then toured smaller, albeit significant, paths of knowledge.

During this journey through related literature I will show, through a significant selection of diverse studies, the limited way in which outdoor adventure education has been investigated and understood. I will demonstrate the paucity of information that has been unearthed about the meanings of outdoor adventure experiences and the importance of generating these subjective emotions in a wholistic or "contextualized" way. In wilderness, group members construct their way of viewing their own particular



experience through their biographies. For the most part research has ignored this key dimension of adventure education. Not enough attention has been given to what wilderness participants experience and what they find to be significant. Adventure education has conventionally defined students as a role directed people in specific programmes and has all but ignored their subjective selves. Here, students act and react according to instructions given by leaders with little regard for the students' own unique biographies. But in wilderness, a metaphor for freedom, students should be encouraged to experience and express their intellectual, spiritual, social, emotional and physical journeys according to their unique selves. Wilderness naturally promotes subjective selves to emerge; this is the fundamentally empowering element of wilderness. With these thoughts in mind, I strike out on my journey through related literature.

Education in the out-of-doors is the oldest and most traditional form of human pedagogy. As we enter humankind's third millennium of recorded time, many diverse trails of outdoor education may be found. One such path is adventure education. While the goals and objectives of adventure programmes are extremely broad, adventure education's fundamental goal is the wholistic learning and growing toward the realization and actualization of one's potential.

Miles and Priest (1990) explained that this philosophy of adventure education, the enhancement of self through an outdoor medium, is more consciously being accomplished to meet the needs of today's society. The recognition of the importance and potency of self-development through the out-of-doors has been reflected in the number of adventure programmes offered and the magnitude of programme evaluation research conducted.

#### Wilderness Adventure Studies

The pathway of adventure-based experiential education traces its course from ancient aboriginal cultures to philosophers and educators such as William James, John Dewey and Kurt Hahn. However, as a specific field of education, it is a very young domain that was only formally organized in the 1950's (Ewert, 1989). Similarly, paths of research and evaluation of these adventure programmes only began to emerge once their advocates began to triumph their expected outcomes (Warner, 1990).

The majority of research trails conducted in adventure education converge on the evaluation of outcome issues through the use of positivistic research methods. Most of these studies relied on programme participants to complete pre- and post-test questionnaires in an attempt to document

positive outcome changes across the programme on key personality traits, such as self-concept, self-esteem and locus of control. Positive alterations of these self-outcome measures may be considered a gauge of personal growth. Therefore, in an attempt to remain "objective", in the positivist sense, a popular method to demonstrate outcome changes in various aspects of personal growth was through pre-selected quantifiable measures. For example, several reliable and validated quantifiable scales exist to study changes in levels of self-concept, such as the popular Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Most of these scales are convenient to use, have high reliability and have hence proven to be a prevalent evaluation tool of outdoor adventure programmes. With very few exceptions, studies using quantifiable self-concept scales reported that after participation in an outdoor adventure programme, participants' level of self-concept demonstrated significant improvements (Ewert, 1983a, 1986, 1989; Richards, 1977; Vogel, 1988).

As previously stated, the only trail I found pertaining to weekends trips was a track of single impressions. This track of Munn's (1983) investigated the impact of a two-day wilderness programme with handicapped adolescents. This quantitative outcome study attempted to determine whether or not this kind of brief wilderness experience would

significantly alter participants' locus of control and level of self-esteem. Munn's findings indicated that the brief wilderness experience did influence participants' locus of control in a positive direction; however, the effect on self-esteem was neutral. The study concluded that the duration of a wilderness programme is an essential variable for influencing self-esteem.

Unfortunately, much of this type of outcome research in the out-of-doors is plagued with difficulties in research design. For example, many outcome studies, such as Munn's (1983), have focused on special need groups, and for the most part have neglected the general population (Wood, 1985). This may be due to the fact that significant changes in levels of self-concept type measures are more obvious with special populations, who often begin outdoor programmes with lower levels of self-concept than do the general public. Hence, significant differences may be more easily detected through these populations.

Many other common research limitations of outcome studies are also evident. Therefore, generalizations and casual inferences from the majority of positivistic outdoor research studies should be approached cautiously. These studies' common weaknesses include small sample sizes, lack of control groups, the Hawthorne and ceiling effects, and

impressionistic versus systematic evaluations. Furthermore, due to the nature of wilderness programmes, true randomization of subjects is rare; in fact in most cases, subjects are self-selected for treatment groups. As well, the view of causality remains in doubt. In light of these weaknesses, internal and external validity pose severe restrictions on result interpretation. It is evident that from a positivistic, empiricist point of view, most of the outdoor related research designs are, by their nature, weak and limited in their scope and applicability (Ewert, 1983a; Kraft, 1988; Warner, 1990). However, the vast majority of research literature, such as Ewert's (1983a) exhaustive research analysis of outdoor adventure and self-concept, supports the belief that well structured adventure programmes positively enhance participants in a number of ways, ie., self-concept, self-esteem, locus of control, physical ability, and societal dealings (Ewert, 1983a). Warner (1990, p. 310) points out that, while weak, "the multitude of positive results tend to bewilder reviewers into concluding that there is a documented improvement in self-concept as a result of intensive outdoor adventure programmes."

While the great majority of adventure education research literature focuses on outcome issues, such as self-concept, it virtually ignores programme issues, such as

course length, methodologies, content and instructional staff (Ewert, 1983a; Kolb, 1991). The whole context of the experience has yet to be considered. Unable to provide a cause-effect relationship, Ewert (1983a, p. 27) concluded that outdoor education "does something 'good' to or for the participant.... but we're not sure how it does it." For the most part, outdoor educators know that their programmes provide positive outcomes, but they do not know why or how. In fact, few studies have attempted to identify cause and effect relationships. Hence, according to Ewert, linkages between outcome and programme must be established. It is an aim of this study to provide a connection between programme content, methodology and effect.

To date, qualitative research, investigating wilderness adventure programmes and their human experiences, have been minimal. Warner (1990) asserted that it is now necessary for adventure programme researchers to focus on the quality of the experience in a wholistic manner. A recent example of this approach is Richley's (1992) phenomenological investigation of wilderness solitude. This study illustrated the value of voluntary wilderness solitude and its potential as a tool for personal growth and self-discovery. Richley's analysis is one of few short-term wilderness studies. In this investigation four co-researchers took part in a three day and three night



wilderness solo. The participants described their experiences in personal journals as well as through successive interviews. Through phenomenological investigation of the data, themes pertaining to each individual's wilderness experience emerged. In a discussion of common themes, Richley explicated the essence of self-chosen wilderness solitude. These themes included self-discovery, knowledge of self, melancholy, spirituality, wilderness as temple, connectedness, balance of communion and solitude, darkness and light, silence, boredom, sensory awareness, willingness for solitary experience and time. These themes help to further our understanding of the nature of human beings in wilderness and the importance of their relationship with the natural environment. Furthermore, these themes illuminate the potential of self-chosen wilderness solitude for therapy and healing.

Morrison's (1986) study of the wilderness solo from a phenomenological perspective is similar to Richley's (1992), as both explored the value of solitude from a therapeutic perspective. Although different phenomenological methods were used to analyze the data, some similar themes were drawn from the studies. Morrison's themes included appreciation of relationships, appreciation of humour, attunement to natural rhythms, freedom from distractions, change in time perspectives, simplicity, freedom of



expression, attunement to senses and nature, and sense of pride. On validating the potential of wilderness solitude for therapy similar conclusions were drawn in both Richley's and Morrison's theses. While both Richley's and Morrison's studies extend the knowledge base of relatively short-term wilderness solitude experiences, they do little to advance our understanding of group wilderness excursions, more popular among educational institutions.

Another related inquiry was that of Stringer & McAvoy's (1992) exploratory investigation of spirituality and wilderness adventure. Although spirituality has received little emphasis, Stringer & McAvoy (1992, p. 14) cited its magnitude; "Spirituality has often been described as that which gives meaning and purpose to life." This study investigated whether the wilderness environment and wilderness adventure programmes are conducive to spiritual development and explored the nature of such experiences. In this study two groups of mature subjects (average age of 26 years) participated in separate wilderness adventure programmes. One group of 13 volunteers, again some with physical disabilities, participated on an eight day canoe trip. The second group, 13 university students, were enrolled in a leadership class which involved a ten day backpacking trip. The research methodology used in this study employed four sources of data, including pre- and

post-trip questionnaires, participant observation and analysis of participants' trip journals. This study, while naturally broad, made a significant contribution to the outdoor research body in identifying factors that contributed to and inhibited spiritual experiences in wilderness. However, while the length of the trips (8 - 10 days) and size of the groups (n=13) help to foster spiritual development, trips of such length with so few participants are unfortunately unrealistic for the majority of educational institutions.

Using qualitative measures Segal (1988) explored the nature and meaning of the experience of "communing with nature in wilderness." This study utilized a phenomenological methodology to obtain and examine interview data from six experienced individuals (three men and three women) who independently spent extended periods of time in wilderness. Segal unearthed common themes from the participants' wilderness trips which made up meaningful aspects of their experiences. These themes were chronologically categorized as heightened sensory awareness, heightened sensory awareness/emotional catharsis and heightened spiritual awareness. Segal reported that all of the participants believed that a heightened sensory awareness in wilderness led to a personal, emotional catharsis which involved looking back on their entire lives.

Consequently, this helped the participants to develop a sense of connectedness to something larger than their physical-selves. Finally, the process of recognizing this growth and opening oneself to it was considered highly positive and even therapeutic.

Beck (1987) argued that the least resolved question of the numerous benefits attributed to outdoor recreation was the nature of the psychological response to the experience. In reaction to this need, Beck conducted a quasi-phenomenological investigation of optimal experiences attained by 66 white-water river recreationists. The purpose of this study was to inquire into the phenomenology of optimal experiences in response to a day of wilderness white-water river paddling. Data was collected via interviews and questionnaires. Each taped interview was evaluated by five judges utilizing an instrument made up of 30 phenomenological scale items. Overall mean scores were calculated to substantiate the importance of various indicators. Participants' verbatim were used to document the richness of the aforementioned indicators. The overall significance of this wilderness adventure experience was revealed by 45% of the participants to be one of the highlights of their life. While white water paddling is a thrill seeking activity, this study does bring to light the potency of intense, albeit brief, adventure programmes which

have qualities that promote deeply meaningful and enriching experiences for participants.

Walsh (1989) conducted a phenomenological study of eight women's experiences in wilderness. All women were regular participants in wilderness activities. Several themes expressed as major clusters and polarities were identified. The clusters included themes such as selfhood, connectedness, separateness and wilderness. Themes expressed as polarities were independence versus dependence, connectedness versus separateness, vulnerability versus capability and life versus death. In the study, wilderness was found to be a therapeutic medium through which women could learn to cope with the often difficult and necessary transitions of adult life.

Legault's (1989, 1991) phenomenological investigation explored unique dimensions of human experience in wilderness. In this study several small groups of participants ( $9 \leq n \leq 16$ ) were guided over time into intimate personal interactions with the elements of nature. They were taught how to focus inward so that they were able to increase their awareness of their inner-state through meditative practices and movement awareness activities. After this ability to focus inward was learned, participants were invited to interact with nature through movement in

order to embody qualities of elements of nature, such as trees and rocks. Through these exploratory movements it was hoped that the participants would gain various degrees of contentedness with elements of nature. During their experiences, participants learned to hear nature speak about "herself" and about them, and learned to hear what can only be said by her. Afterwards, participants objectified their experiences by making naive symbolic drawings and writing short descriptive passages. Data was collected through the self report, interviews and participant observation. While focusing on teaching an interactive process with nature, Legault's work explored an uncommon path of trying to understand nature from her perspective and thus nurture the participants' interconnectedness with her.

It is evident that existing research trails, leading toward the comprehension of the meanings of wilderness experiences, are diverse, narrow, seldom travelled and few in number. Most are rarely traversed by more than one researcher. The possible tracks of wilderness adventure inquiry are as vast as the wilderness itself. However, as these trails stretch further into the frontier it is undoubtable that more complete understandings of wilderness' potency, of how and why wilderness effects humankind, will emerge.

### Importance of Interpersonal Relations

Next to the death penalty, the harshest punishment that can be inflicted upon individuals is to deprive them of intimate human company (Jourard & Landsman, 1980). Studies of primitive human cultures report that humans have always lived in groups. In fact, the human culture has been characterized by intense and persistent relationships among its members. Modern interpersonal behaviour has been an evolutionary adaptation of humans' primitive group relations and "without intense, positive, reciprocal interpersonal bonds, both individual and species survival would not have been possible" (Yalom, 1985).

By nature, people are committed to a social existence that must serve their personal needs and interests and concurrently acknowledge those needs and interests of the group to which they belong (Yalom, 1985). This dilemma, of simultaneously meeting the needs of self and other, may be resolved through the recognition that one's self-interest can best be realized through a commitment to others. The basic human need for response and recognition from others can be attained through mutual attention. Exemplifying this, Yalom found conclusive evidence that the rate for virtually every major cause of death is significantly higher for the lonely, the single, the divorced and the widowed.



Adept social skills are vital for everyday interpersonal relations and ultimately intrapersonal happiness and well being. Unfortunately, today's society seems to do little to nurture these social skills and seems to place less value on them than in earlier years. Most modern-day parents place less emphasis on teaching their children adequate communication skills and often abdicate this responsibility, along with others, to the schools. The importance of families and the social skills learned therein seem to be losing their inherent value. For example, during the dinner hour many families now watch television together instead of focusing their attention on interpersonal communication. Additionally, Sunday, the traditional day of rest and social gatherings, is being severely threatened by Sunday shopping, an unfortunate illustration of modern society's short-term vision of convenience and progress. Hence, while good interpersonal communication and social skills are deemed to be basic assets for a happy and healthy life, these fundamental needs of our children are being thoughtlessly neglected.

The significance of healthy interpersonal skills in everyday life was clearly illustrated by Johnson (1990). Johnson reported that a 1982 American nation-wide survey of businesses, labour unions and educational institutions found that lack of interpersonal skill accounted for an extremely



high proportion of all job losses, while being fired for basic and technical skills was infrequent. Consequently, interpersonal skills are at least equally as critical for employment and well-being as technical skills. The interpersonal dimension in adventure education is undisputed, as in everyday life, it is the foundation upon which successful programmes and relationships are built. In light of this, Priest (1986) suggested that the primary mission of adventure education should be the development of intra- and inter-personal relationship capabilities.

### Self-Disclosure

In the late 1950's Jourard (1971) began to research the process of "being one's real self in relation to others" and "letting one's actions reveal one's true intentions." In order to measure these phenomena Jourard composed a reliable questionnaire to assess the amount and quality of personal information individuals disclose to one another. He found that the amount of personal information individuals mutually shared was an index of the "closeness" of their relationship. This closeness included such feelings and emotions of affection, love, or trust that prevail between two people (Jourard, 1971). As well, Jourard determined that liking, self-disclosure, disclosure-intake, knowing and being known are interrelated. Since that time it has been

affirmed that in a group, the level of self-disclosure heightens as group members become closer to one another (Kirshner, et al. 1978). However, the cause-effect relationship of self-disclosure and closeness to others remains unknown. Jourard (1971) stated that,

Once contact has been made between two persons, they proceed to 'uncover' themselves one to the other at a mutually regulated pace. If it is generally true that intimate self-disclosure begets intimate self-disclosure while impersonality begets impersonality, then certain implications follow for a number of areas of interpersonal endeavour.

Within North American society a masked population of individuals strive to present or actually become a different personality. Their actions are often aimed at misleading others into believing they have an identity of which they do not; a phenomenon known as "marketing personality" (Jourard, 1971). Their lives, a tragedy of searching for an artificial self, mask their true selves. This common life story may be avoided by people believing in and appreciating their true selves; by disclosing their true selves (and consequently risking their egos) to trust and confide in respected friends. Through this communication individuals are often drawn together and learn more about their own identities, as well as the identities of others. In this

vein of self-disclosure, Jourard drew the following analogy between individuals and books: some people let themselves be read from cover to cover, while others share only the title and the author's name. As a psychotherapist working toward developing healthier personalities, Jourard found a positive linear relationship between the openness of people and their mental health.

Research from sensitivity groups has unfortunately demonstrated that in everyday life people rarely enter into situations where they may openly share their thoughts, feelings and emotions. Most individuals seldom allow themselves the opportunity to risk and expose themselves to others. Jourard (1964) found that people will only permit their feelings to be known if they sincerely believe that their listeners are of good will. Many find it difficult to trust others and believe in the kindness, sincerity and empathy of their fellow beings. This sharing of emotions, established through trust, usually leads to a greater understanding and respect for self and others. Mutual exploration is like unveiling a mystery, and often serves to bind friendships (Zander, 1982). People cannot help foster another person's happiness and growth without being aware of what the individual needs, and, one cannot know others' needs are unless they are disclosed through communication. Therefore, through greater self-disclosure people are often

able to attain better health and fuller functioning lives only to the degree that they gain courage to be themselves among others (Jourard).

Outdoor adventure programmes are ideal for nurturing trust and fostering respect for others and, thus, can promote and naturally encourage self-disclosure. Hence, it is often in wilderness that individuals gain this courage to self-disclose and be themselves among others. The very nature of wilderness activities lend themselves to enhancing communication and feelings of good-will toward others. Living in an unfamiliar environment, often under rugged and taxing conditions, wilderness travellers are predisposed to cooperate with and rely on each other for their physical, social and emotional needs. Severed from their daily lifestyles and communication with significant others, participants usually draw together for mutual support. This natural bonding sets a firm base for the natural "magical" self-awareness and interpersonal growth to develop and flourish in wilderness.

#### Hendee-Brown Model

The Hendee-Brown Model is a unique explanatory model of how wilderness experiences can foster personal growth. The authors, Hendee and Brown (1987, p.7), defined personal

growth as "a range of effects toward expanded fulfilment of one's capabilities and potential." The conceptual framework of the Hendee-Brown Model consists of four postulates and four hypotheses that describe a sequential process by which personal growth can be achieved through programmed outdoor experiences (Hendee & Brown, 1988). The four postulates for growth contend that: (1) personal growth is dependent on the receptivity of the participant; (2) personal growth is dependent on optimal stress (physically and emotionally) during the experience; (3) wilderness experiences offer a contrast from the realities of everyday life which help to foster the opportunity for attunement of one's self and sensitivity to the environment; and (4) wilderness experiences provide the opportunity for the creation of metaphors to heighten personal awareness of desirable qualities, which may subsequently be applied to everyday life.

The Hendee-Brown Model hypothesizes that the aforementioned postulates result in the following: (1) increased personal awareness of core patterns, beliefs and values; (2) the placement of participants at their growing edge, where the previously mentioned personal qualities may be evaluated and subsequently altered if desired; and (3) increased social awareness of patterns of social interaction. These patterns can be evaluated and

subsequently improved if desired. And (4), the wilderness provides inspiration through the humbling influences of nature. The four postulates and hypotheses of the Hendee-Brown Model lend strong support to this investigation as well as to the development of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model.

The Hendee-Brown Model provides an excellent framework to conceptually illustrate growth experiences in a wilderness environment. The model explains that every wilderness group is composed of unique individuals who must interact with one another for the duration of the experience. Participants bring along their own personal baggage of habits, defenses, masks, and roles. As most outdoor trips unfold, individuals relax, tune into the rhythms of the environment, themselves and others, and ultimately begin to shed many of their inhibitions. Through the ensuing outdoor socialization process "stories are told, secrets are revealed, pains are shared, new alliances and friendships are formed and existing friendships or family bonds are strengthened" (Hendee & Brown, 1988).

With little chance for the participants to leave or hide, skilled outdoor leaders have the unique opportunity to guide their "captive audience" through the difficult and usually foreign work of exploring personal values, feelings



and social patterns. The cooperation that is necessary in a wilderness trip helps to foster honest and sincere interaction. In fact, according to Hendee & Brown (1988), interpersonal growth activities, such as cooperative games, in the outdoor environment can "greatly enhance the quality and depth of personal search and social interaction, and this heightens self-discovery, communication and social awareness."

The Hendee-Brown Model describes the wilderness as a socially ambiguous and undifferentiated environment where all humans are more or less equals. In this setting individuals must interact at basic human levels. While coping in a foreign and often harsh environment, participants find themselves unprotected by status and other social phenomena. Unprotected, without their masks, they have the opportunity to see themselves as others do, to see others as never before, and to recognize and appreciate humanity. This empowering revelation can lead to changes in personal destiny. As well-programmed outdoor experiences progress, interpersonal trust and respect grows and the social rules formed at the beginning of the trip alter. The social risk of self-disclosing oneself lessens and more functional and effective patterns of social interaction are inspired.



Through my extensive travels of literature trails pertaining to personal growth, it is my belief that the Hendee-Brown Model provides the best current explanation of how and why well-programmed wilderness experiences can facilitate personal growth. The Hendee-Brown Model is one of very few models to highlight the significance of self and other in wilderness and suggests that participants in wilderness renegotiate their social reality. The model contributes a worthwhile framework to guide the design of wilderness programmes, as well as the training of outdoor leaders. However, while an extremely useful explanatory model of personal growth through wilderness experiences and a significant contributor to the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, the Hendee-Brown Model only highlights basic pedagogical principles and provides a limited number of practical programme suggestions. Another model, that presents a portion of the answer toward outdoor education model development, is the forthcoming Adventure Based Counselling Model.

#### Adventure Based Counselling Model

Adventure Based Counselling is a unique programme of Project Adventure Inc. Project Adventure Inc. was initiated with the philosophy that the insights attained through an Outward Bound type programme could be learned through a

traditional (urban) high school physical education schedule. After experiencing a great deal of success since its inception in 1971, Project Adventure Inc. expanded to meet the needs of unique groups. Some of these include corporations seeking executive team-building training and special needs populations searching for effective methodologies to enhance personal growth (Prouty, 1990).

The Adventure Based Counselling Model (ABC) was specifically designed in 1974 to meet perhaps one of the most basic requirements of special needs students--the improvement of self-concept. These special needs populations include handicapped individuals, delinquents, youths experiencing difficulties at home, as well as those with psychological problems. The ABC Model is a community-based group counselling model that creates a multitude of physical and mental opportunities for personal challenges and growth. These opportunities are provided through activities such as cooperative games, initiative problem solving activities as well as adventure rope-course elements.

ABC is a humanistic model based on trust, care and respect. Trust, a basic element in the ABC model, can build greater group cohesion and lead to physical and emotional sharing, openness, acceptance and support. Trust is also

the basis on which many other critical growth principles, such as self-disclosure, develop. Students who feel a sense of trust and respect towards their group members are more likely to risk, fail, succeed and ultimately grow. Without trust students take less risks; hence, learning and growth suffer. The ABC model is designed to foster growth through challenging the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Webb (1988, p. vi) described a philosophy of the programme;

We have known for a long time that human expressions of support, caring and encouragement build strength. These are fundamental components of how we show our love and respect for each other. We have also known for a long time that challenge and risk, in a supportive environment which values effort, create an opportunity for humans to discover and develop their potentialities.

As previously stated, ABC's primary goal is the enhancement of self-concept of special needs groups. This goal is achieved through a mixture of methodologies including experiential learning, outdoor education and group counselling and therapy techniques. The key elements of the programme's model are building trust, setting goals, solving problems and providing opportunities for peak experiences,

humour, fun, optimal challenges and stress (Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988).

The ABC Model is designed to be utilized over a relatively lengthy period of time with special populations. Conceptualized for a highly controllable urban setting, participants partake in ABC once or twice per week over a period of several months or even years. Additionally, in order for ABC to be effective, participants must be placed in situations of perceived physical risk where they must trust their peers for their personal safety. Once this is accomplished the ABC programme is carefully extended to encompass the domains of emotional and social risk. While similar, the Wilderness Personal Growth Model is less reliant on the aspect of perceived physical risk and places far less emphasis on group processing and problem solving. Formulated to meet many of ABC's objectives, the Wilderness Personal Growth Model requires far less time and is designed for use in wilderness with "normal" populations.

#### The Outdoor Group and Leadership Development Model

Gibson's (1977) study on outdoor group and leadership investigated how group ( $6 \leq n \leq 25$ ) wilderness experiences, ranging from 10-16 days in wilderness over an academic semester or month intensive, affected participants' levels

of self-concept, leadership aspirations, and communication abilities. Gibson varied leadership roles and curricula emphasis and measured, with pre- and post-test questionnaires (self-rating scale and a group rating scale), changes in four areas of outdoor self-actualization: outdoor sportsman, skilled outdoor sportsman, sensory awareness and outdoor group leader. Gibson also used personal observations and participant trip journals to record and measure changes during and after the research period. Significant positive changes were found in perceived self by individuals in the aforementioned areas, thus affecting a change in their level of total self-concept. Gibson noted that while specific areas of self-concept can be improved through wilderness adventure journeys, these specific changes are dependent on what activities, group structure, leadership model and interaction are used in the outdoor programme. In his study, Gibson also presented his unique Outdoor Group and Leadership Development Model that assists in the organization, construction and evaluation of outdoor group and leadership experiences. In this model Gibson utilized a triad of self, referent other student and referent other leader. The Outdoor Group and Leadership Development Model, and particularly its organization of human roles in a wilderness group context, contributed significantly to the Wilderness Personal Growth Model.

## Conclusion

Adventure education outcome studies, usually weak by design, gain little significant understandings as to how and why personal changes occur during outdoor programmes. Several qualitative studies unearth meaningful insights of humans in wilderness; however, few have investigated what participants experience and what participants find to be significant. Furthermore, no studies have attempted to understand the meanings of most widely used method of wilderness for formal educational purposes: large group wilderness journeys of short duration. In order to inspire youth and help them to realize the vitality of wilderness and its empowering life benefits, we must begin to understand what these weekend journeys mean to students; we must discover how, why, and what teaching methodologies are the most efficient and effective in the realization of wilderness' profound educational potential.

To this point in my intellectual journey I have counted upon the tracks of others. Their preceding steps, into the forests of outdoor education and personal growth, enabled me to traverse their routes. Their trails broadened my horizons and led me to view and experience areas of knowledge that I would never have ventured unaided. Travelling their paths I learned much and gained a solid

foundation of outdoor research areas. But I was troubled by the existing gap in the understanding of self and other in the context of large group weekend experiences, so critical to educational institutions. With this in mind, I felt compelled to extend this vital knowledge base of wilderness adventure education. At this point, close to my vision quest, I left the trails of others to forge deeper into the forests with the skills and knowledge necessary for an uncertain but productive journey.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE STUDY'S JOURNEYS

##### Description of the Enriched Group's Journey

In order for the reader to gain a better appreciation of the researched wilderness experiences, a detailed description of the enriched group's journey follows. In the ethnographic research tradition it provides a chronology of the weekend's events and a description of both the physical setting and the social activity sequence from the Friday through the Sunday of the trip. My role as a participant observer on this three day journey was unique, since I participated as neither a student nor as a leader. This opportunity allowed me to experience the trip from a rare perspective, living the experience first hand like a student, yet having the opportunity to step back and observe the group and its members as a researcher. A summary of this journey may be found in Appendix E. So toss your pack into the trailer and jump in the van. We are off to share a weekend wilderness canoe journey with 30 special individuals.

The journey begins on a Friday afternoon in late September with 28 students, two leaders, Martin and Anne, and myself meeting at the University of Alberta's Campus

Outdoor Centre. The students first complete a brief pre-questionnaire (Appendix B) before loading their gear and 15 canoes onto the two vans and trailers. By late afternoon, we are finally "en route" amidst much excitement, chatter and some apprehension. An hour later, immediately after crossing the Genesee bridge, heads crane in the vans to catch a glimpse of the North Saskatchewan River on which we will share our weekend journey. We turn off the highway and onto a dusty gravel track that leads us down into the river valley and to our departure point. With a great deal of nervous laughter and anticipation, the sun hanging low in the sky, we systematically load and ferry the 15 boats across the swift current of the river to the campsite.

The campsite borders the north side of the river on pasture land a few hundred metres downstream from the Genesee bridge. Tangles of roots, leaves and mud are mute evidence to the strength of last year's spring flood waters. This jumble of debris hangs in the overhead branches of the large poplars which stand on the shores. We pitch our tents among the trees and share our campsite with cattle, whose large droppings litter the muddy soil. Nestled in the valley at the river's edge, this peaceful site contrasts sharply with the busy city that we left only two hours earlier. Unfortunately, the tranquil atmosphere is frequently broken by the distant thunder of trucks crossing

the bridge, an overt reminder of the elusiveness of solitude.

Anne, Martin and I, after some searching and discussing, find a flat spot large enough to accommodate our tent. We quickly set up camp and prepare the evening meal. Two hours fly by and the sun quickly slips below the horizon, followed by a sharp decline in the temperature that rapidly approaches the freezing mark. After a satiating dinner of stew we gather around the fire ring as the first few stars begin to twinkle, welcoming the coming night. Martin begins the evening programme with several ice-breaking activities, starting with "Incorporation", "Sculpture", and then a "Group Sit" which is followed by a blindfolded "Birthday Line Up" (Appendix D). Retaining our "blindness", Martin then transforms us into specific animals, each with a corresponding call. The object of this game is to organize ourselves into a line according to our animal size. The next few moments erupt into a predictable flurry of snorts, clucks and every other vocalisation imaginable as we stumble into a semblance of organization. While perhaps a little too time consuming, these games seem to be an effective tool in helping us feel more comfortable with one another and in creating a positive social atmosphere for the trip. Such themes as fun, respect

for others, trust and social risk emerge from partaking in the games.

We soon gather under a brilliant canopy of stars and begin our first sharing circle. Encircling the warm glow of the fire, we are asked to share some information about ourselves: our name, where we live, our favourite activity, and what we liked most about the ice-breakers we had just played. One by one we share these bits of informative, although superficial elements of ourselves. The completion of this part of the sharing circle is followed by a session of expressing our personal expectations of and concerns about the trip. This session is met with some nervous giggles while sparks from the fire drift into the night sky. Each of us struggles with how much of ourselves to risk disclosing, how much of ourselves to share. For the most part, each speaker holds the interest of the group, as the fire cackles sending a radiant shine over the party's faces. To the surprise of many, most of us discover that our expectations and especially our concerns are shared by other members of the group.

After the sharing circle, four students proceed with an astronomy presentation. Remarkably, as if on cue, an extraordinary aurora borealis appears in the sky during this session. The green luminous glow dances overhead, treating

us to a spectacular magical display. The upper boundary of the surreal, twisting curtains diffuse into the night, impelling thirty one souls to contemplate their humility. To most, this mystical sight must be a powerful awe-inspiring moment. In my mind our neon-filled society is submitted to the grandeur of nature and I am encouraged to search for higher ideals and values. My thoughts turn to Robert Scott, the British Antarctic explorer, who wrote of the aurora borealis.

It is impossible to witness such a beautiful phenomenon without a sense of awe, and yet this sentiment is not inspired by its sense of brilliancy but rather by its delicacy in light and colour, its transparency, and above all by its tremulous evanescence of form. There is no glittering splendour to dazzle the eye, as has been too often described; rather the appeal is to the imagination by the suggestion of something wholly spiritual.

The irony of the situation is that in this semi-northern climate which we Canadians inhabit, the northern lights regularly perform their dancing ritual. We Canadians, engrossed in our self-imposed, everyday life, seldom take the time to marvel at natural displays such as this. Feeling the potency of the aurora's energy transfer to the group, I am grateful that we have been given this gift. Furthermore, realizing the northern lights' preference to

appear during the months surrounding the equinox, I feel remorse that the canoeing season will soon draw to a close.

When the northern lights disappear we circle around the crackling fire, press together to gain the fire's radiant warmth and listen to a reading by Robert Service from Martin. The group falls silent as Martin rivets our attention to the reading;

... Have you ever stood in an Arctic hut in the  
shadow of the Pole,

With a little coffin six by three and a grief you can't  
control?

Have you ever sat by a frozen corpse that looks at you  
with a grin,

And that seems to say: "You may try all day, but you'll  
never jam me in"?

I'm not a man of the quitting kind, but I never felt so  
blue,

As I sat there gazing at that stiff and studying what  
I'd do.

Then I rose and I kicked off the husky dogs that were  
nosing round about,

And I lit a roaring fire in the snow, and I started to  
thaw Bill out ... (Service, 1940, p. 45-48).

The tale over, we drift off into the night in search of the security of our tents and warm sleeping bags.

During the night, bone chilling, wolf-like howls echo from across the river. I smile to myself as I shift in my sleeping bag, wondering if any of the students know that we are but a stone's throw from the sled dogs of St. John's School.

Saturday morning, as the sun peaks over the horizon through some threatening cloud cover, I arise from my warm cocoon. The temperature of the damp air has begun to climb from its overnight low of  $-1^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Geese honk from above as they form into gaggles for another day's journey south; they are another reminder that the canoeing season will soon end. Groups of four soon emerge from their tents. They huddle around cooking stoves eating breakfast and sipping hot chocolate to ward off the morning's chill.

Breakfast is followed by the dismantling of our temporary tent village. The contents of the village are stored in packs and loaded into the canoes. Before embarking on our first full day of canoeing, we play an active warm-up game of "Elves, Giants and Wizards" (Appendix D) and partake in group stretching exercises. Canoe partner sharing sessions follow. In the privacy of pairs the canoeists share one of their concerns for the day and one detail they appreciate about their canoe partner.



With the large group of novice paddlers we depart from the site with surprisingly little confusion. The sun begins to shine and the temperature rises along with the group's anticipation of the day ahead. We soon stop for lunch on an island where we participate in a group game of "Cosmic" (Appendix D). Back on the water, my belly filled with peanut butter, crackers and cheese, we continue paddling down the river--stroke after stroke. During the afternoon, we come across several hunters on the river's edge. The sound of gunfire erupts as shotgun pellets blaze into the trees and water, sending chills soaring up my spine. I am swept back into the reality of the world where humans attempt to dominate and control all aspects of their world. This violent atmosphere compels me to appreciate and sympathize with the animals and birds who are 'the' hunted. Additionally, emotions of anger and shame swell up inside of me. Thankful I am not on either end of the gun, we continue downstream. Several students in canoes chart courses of their own and, subsequently, become stuck on gravel bars in the middle of the river. Leave them be, I ponder, experiences such as these provide them with real dilemmas, with real consequences, and demand immediate problem solving. Opportunities such as this allow nature to be their teacher, a prime example of experiential education.

On several occasions during the day we bring all 15

boats together to form one large raft. Content and weary, we lie back in the canoes, clutch the gunwales of a neighbouring canoe, and soak in the sun's warm rays. These rafting experiences allow us far more than a physical break from paddling. They encourage us to socialize and reflect. We trade stories, share food and drink, and discuss many issues of life. The "rafts" also provide us with moments to reflect upon and appreciate our surroundings, while drifting lazily with the current toward our objective.

I notice spruce and poplar trees lining the muddy banks of the river. The contrast between the autumn yellows of the poplar leaves and the light and dark greens of the spruce is beautiful. We travel onward, led by the river. From its genesis on the Saskatchewan Glacier, the water of the North Saskatchewan River tumbles out of the Rocky Mountains, twists across the great plains to Lake Winnipeg and joins the Nelson River on its journey north-east to the great Hudson Bay. Where we accompany it, the river water cuts and weaves its way through an ancient sea bed. The water gnaws away at its banks and steadily unearths the land's past. Travelling this corridor of history I can't help but feel rather insignificant among the plethora of remnants depicting the past. For millenniums the North Saskatchewan River, analogous to a body's artery, has transported the life-blood of nature's existence--water.

Since before the birth of Christ humans have travelled this waterway, using the simplest yet most functional boat design--the canoe. The canoe is the ultimate craft. It is light, symmetrical and balanced. The canoe takes us on a journey through time, on a journey to humility, contemplation of self and togetherness. The canoe is a good metaphor for our lives. Propelled by its occupants it encourages independence, but teaches cooperation. The canoe carries what we need to survive with no room for extras. It is strong but bends to wild water and big waves ... It counsels care and moderation. It can be blown away by the wind, and it can provide shelter when all else is gone. But best of all, this canoe takes us to the land, into the land, to places where we would never be without it. We can take it up the mountain to where the river rises. It can take us to the sea (Raffan, 1990, p. 173-174).

We float down the river, leaving a trail of ripples which slowly dissipate by the river's edge.

Philosophical musings are set aside by weariness and hunger. As the sun tracks its late afternoon course, we arrive at our destination for the night. Before unpacking our boats, canoe partners conduct another pair sharing session. They each express their day's highlights and what each one appreciates the most about the other. With

feelings exchanged, a multitude of gear is brought up from the beach to the campsite. We pitch our tents in a rough circle, on a large, flat grassy area about seven metres above the river, an area that we would call home for tonight.

By dinner time, the clouds have cleared and the sun begins to dip down over the horizon. The warmth of the day disappears with the sun. The donning of clothing is one way to ward off the night chill. The second way to keep warm (and replenish the energy lost to a day of paddling) is to eat. After dinner the group splits into three sub-groups for a portion of the evening's programme. Three stations are established, each offering a different agenda of cooperative games followed by a sharing circle. The students clutch, lift, step over and support each other through a myriad of tasks. The games are alive with strategic discussions, leading, following and laughing. The students assist one another in the challenges, but the sessions turn out to be more than 'just' games. They are an opportunity to reflect upon the role of oneself and the roles of others in the group.

The games are soon shrouded in darkness and the whole community is brought together by the campfire. We soak in the warmth of the fire as the leadership team begins the

second part of the evening programme, a hide and seek activity called "Sardines" (Appendix D). Large boundaries are established and a solitary group member sets out into the darkness to hide. Spreading out to locate the hidden member, we search for ages before finding her. But instead of declaring the missing member found, the searchers squish together with the discovered soul and hide as a team. The number of hidden individuals grows until all are present, creating a massive pile of 31 bodies pressed together like a can of sardines in the darkness of the forest. The activity proves to be a difficult challenge to many and is declared a great success by all. We gather, once again, around the fire to share one point that each of us learned this evening. The leadership team then leads the group through several mentally challenging problem solving games as well as several seemingly silly, but enjoyable activities. Overhead, beyond the trees, the moon smiles down upon us, casting its glow across the grassy field and into the trees. Martin, Anne and I soon retire to our tent leaving the students with some time to themselves, most of whom remain around the fire until quite late. Content with the day, excited for the morrow, I lie in my bag and wait for sleep to overcome me. The chatter and laughter from around the fire fades as my consciousness drifts to the songs of the forest and into my dreams.

My eyes open this Sunday morning to an eerie silence. The morning sunlight filters through the blue nylon of our tent to fall softly upon the mounds of sleeping bags with whom I share rather cramped quarters. Reluctantly, I crawl from my warm sleeping bag to be greeted by an overcast, but clearing sky. A pair of low flying geese wing their way up the river and disappear into the landscape. A light mist lies over the water and a heavy dew sits on the grassy plain, patiently awaiting the sun's energy to transport it aloft. Feeling the morning's chill of near freezing temperatures, I zip up my jacket and savour one of nature's best kept secrets--the magic of morning.

The group is slower at getting up this morning after yesterday's long day and late night; but, soon the site is a buzz with the hiss of gas stoves and morning chatter. After breakfast, Anne shares a powerful thought for the day with us on the natives' perspective of wilderness and contrasts it to that of the white persons' outlook. Encircled on the grassy plain Anne begins;

We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on.... The deer, the horse, the

great eagle, these are our brothers, the earth is our mother ... All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons (and daughters) of the earth (Chief Seattle, 1855).

As Anne speaks a gust of wind disturbs the still of the morning and colourful leaves shower down upon her like snow in a mystical spectacle. This wind foreshadows the gale force winds that await us later in the afternoon, but we do not understand the significance of nature's soft whispers in the early morning breeze; her warnings go unheeded. With Anne's thought-provoking reading laying heavily upon my consciousness, we load the canoes and paddle off in anticipation of the coming day.

During the morning, I sense a change in attitude in several of the students. As if struck with a bolt of everyday reality, they seem suddenly anxious to get home. Many of the magical qualities of the journey seem to evaporate from within them, like the early morning dew. The responsibilities of school and the "comforts" of home entice the group forward. I am sure that some, in their flurry, would prefer to paddle straight through and not stop until we reach our destination. I feel a surge of frustration as I know that Anne and Martin, faced with the reality of this negative energy, have to motivate the group away from the



growing stampede to the barn door. Furthermore, I feel disappointed for those yearning to get home, for in their hurry they are less able to appreciate the balance of the journey. To some, the remainder of the paddle is treated as an exercise of travelling from one point on a map to another. The episode reflects the values which are promoted through our society. Many find it difficult to shake those values and blindly stumble on. By accepting them without question, they only perpetuate the narrowness of these values. Is our success measured through the achievement of paddling 72 kilometres? What about the significance of the process of the journey? The goal is important, but mostly because it causes us to go through the process; for it is the process that brings us greater awareness and joy. "The honey doesn't taste so good once it is being eaten; the goal doesn't mean so much once it has been reached; the reward is not so rewarding once it has been given" (Hoff, 1983, p. 111). Enjoyment of and learning through the process is the secret that erases the myths of the "great reward"; the reaching of our "final objective".

I believe, as does Raffan (1990), that linear travel, collecting mileage for its own sake, can cripple nature's ability to teach and nurture the trippers. "Canoeing for the sake of covering miles", or "journeying for the sake of getting from 'A' to 'B'" is strictly a functional

enterprise. Such travel may have some lasting effects, but will lack the richness that a more reflective journey can provide. The process cannot be rushed. The journey, the land, and the experience of the natural world must be allowed to take form in one's imagination.

There must at least be openness to and acceptance of the possibility that a journey can be etched in the imagination ... One must acknowledge the spiritual, the mythical dimension of the journey, which has a genesis separate from that of the strictly physical journey involved in getting from one place to another. That is so much more significant than simply a matter of taste (Raffan, 1990, p. 203).

I know that many of the students here understand this but just as many do not. Perhaps, they need more time, perhaps I am expecting too much from a trip of such short duration.

Mid-morning, after a rafting period, Martin organizes a blindfold paddling session where the bow-person in each boat is blindfolded. After a 15 minute paddle, the blindfold is relinquished to the stern-person to wear. Here, like the passenger of an automobile guiding a blind driver, the bow-person directs the stern-person in steering the canoe. What a sight; red, blue and green canoes, half of the paddlers oblivious to their visual surroundings, but more sensitized to other cues, carefully threading their way down the river.

Creating another raft, we remove the blindfolds and debrief the session. Each member of the group is given the opportunity to express how they felt when they were blindfolded compared to when they were not. Feelings such as trust, lack of control and a deeper sense of sensitivity are shared. With renewed vigour and awareness of ourselves, our partners and the environment, we drift with the current.

Shortly after this sharing circle, the wind achieves a violent intensity, forming dark swells and whipping them up the river. The canoes spread out, leaving each pair to battle the elements on their own. Waves build up and crash into the hull of my canoe. Paddling with much of my strength, I slowly move the water by me and our small craft creeps forward, partially slicing through and partially wallowing over the battering whitecaps. Between power strokes, I delicately adjust the angle of our canoe so that it remains facing into the wind. A momentary loss of concentration and the wind could catch the bow, causing the canoe to flounder broadside in the waves and reverse its course, or perhaps even tip over. My muscles call for rest but my heart and soul are soaring. This self imposed hardship will probably form one of the most significant and meaningful experiences of the journey. For, as Raffan (1990, p. 83) cites, "Suffering is an important part of the wilderness experience, partly because it's nice to know you

can tolerate hardship if and when you have to, but mostly because it's the great stuff to tell fellow canoeists back home." On the recovery, between strokes, my paddle knifes through the wind and at times catches the crest of a wave, sending a spray of water away with a gust. The canoe pitches and rolls, hesitates momentarily, but continues its forward crawl. A significant aspect of a wilderness reality is the deeper meanings derived through a natural life of contrived simplicity and hardship. In this natural world we are coping with the physical reality, the wind, and responding to the challenges that are cast upon us. Stroke by stroke, kilometre by kilometre we are living through problems that "are", rather than problems that we create in our everyday life. Living and travelling in a wilderness environment is an existence full of hardship, physical pain and responses to real and unexpected problems. But through this adversity, this unexpected agony for some, inner peace is often attained. Survival and spirituality, hell and heaven, enlightenment and profound contradiction, are all found together in the same wilderness experience (Raffan, 1990).

Having canoed past our intended lunch hour the group looks like it has had enough. Exhausted and hungry, it is time to place our feet upon solid ground. Amongst moans and sighs of gratefulness to be off the river, the group drags

their lunch up into the trees, in an attempt to find respite from the wail of the wind.

After a brief break, Martin asks us to go and find our own space in the woods, out of sight from anyone else. We are to remain there for about 45 minutes until called in. During this time we can do anything we please, but we must remain stationary and quiet. I have been looking forward to this mini-solo experience. An opportunity to quietly sit and reflect upon whatever comes to mind. Nestled within the tranquil surroundings, temporarily liberated from the stresses of everyday life, my cares seem to drop off like the autumn leaves. Metaphorically, the wind blows through the tree tops and golden yellow leaves float down from above. All is so peaceful. My mind drifts back to the last 48 hours and I am filled with warm memories. Additionally, I sense remorse that we are about to return to our everyday world and that much of my existence is lived within the urban sprawl. An insect lands on my leg. I study it for several minutes before it flies away. What is it? Where and when was it born? How does it survive? Before these questions can be answered we are called in for a closing circle.

After a head count we realize that one of us, Taryn, is missing. I anxiously and quickly search the area on my own

calling and whistling. Unsuccessful, we are split into pairs, provided with specific safety instructions and given precise areas in which to conduct a grid search. After an intense, but short search, Taryn is found sleeping behind a rock down near the river. Tired and embarrassed, she emerges from the beach with the two joyful students who have found her. It is a stressful event with a happy and meaningful ending. With all present, thankful to be together, we proceed to conduct the closing circle. During this final circle each of us shares what has been the most meaningful for us on our weekend journey together.

The wind has abated and we are soon back in our canoes for the final leg of our 72 kilometre journey. We stroke along, some of us conscious of the repetition and physical monotony, others not. I paddle from the centre of my body believing that I am simply an extension of the canoe and it of me. Together, working as one, my partner and I paddle in synchronization. Duality, efficiency, beauty, Canadian heritage--the canoe is all of these. Hours later, our destination approaching, we raft up for one last time. This raft provides us with one final time together without distraction and gives us a final opportunity to make log-book entries. At 18:15 we paddle under the Quesnel bridge and land at our destination. Some of us feel badly that the journey is over and that the same experience can never



be duplicated. Others of us are simply filled with triumph; the journey is accomplished.

#### Programme Details of Both Groups' Journeys

Two days following the trip, during class time, the enriched group completed a post questionnaire (Appendix B). The standard group participated in a trip as identical as possible to that of the aforementioned enriched group's journey. The main differences were that the treatment of cooperative games and other bonding exercises (such as sharing circles) were not provided to the standard group. A summary of these treatments within groups may be found in Appendix F. The canoe route and campsites were the same for both groups, as were the number of students per trip ( $n=28$ ) in addition to the two leaders, Martin and Anne. The trips took place on consecutive weekends with the standard group embarking on their journey a week before the enriched group. The weather was similar on both experiences; however, the temperature was colder on the Saturday night for the standard group. As well, the enriched group had the challenge of canoeing into the wind on Sunday afternoon, in addition to temporarily losing one of their members. For these two reasons the enriched group was slightly later arriving at the take-out than the standard group.



## CHAPTER IV

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO GROUPS' JOURNEYS

My journey, through which I attempted to provide greater and better evidence from which meaningful themes and propositions about wilderness experience may be constructed, involved the triangulation of several research paths. One of these trails included a quantitative comparative analysis of the students' experiences; an investigation studying whether varied methodological contents and processes of large group wilderness weekend experiences influenced students' intra- and interpersonal growth.

In this investigation two intact groups were quantitatively compared with pre- and post-experience questionnaires (Appendix B). The main differences between the groups studied was that cooperative games and formal reflective exercises (such as sharing circles) were provided to a far greater extent to an "enriched-programmed" group compared to a more "standard-programmed" group. Hence, the standard group received less formal intervention than the enriched group. The standard group of subjects, however, cannot be considered a pure control group because they were, in fact, also exposed to the compassionate leadership influences of Martin and Anne. Both Martin and Anne naturally and intuitively created rich and warm socio-

cultural environments. Furthermore, ethical factors, such as not offering both groups a similar type of rich growth experience, prohibited the leaders from guiding a more traditional type of trip more appropriate for a control group. A traditional trip would generally involve travelling long distances and exclude formal growth activities such as cooperative games and programmed reflection. Therefore, the standard group of this study, although provided with no cooperative games and few formal reflective experiences, still underwent a richer wilderness group experience than a true control group may have. As mentioned in Chapters I and III, other than the differences in the treatment effects, both groups participated in weekend canoe trips that were as identical as possible.

The leaders of the two trips, Martin and Anne, are highly skilled outdoor leaders who specialize in the interpersonal aspects of adventure education. Both are graduates of Camrose Lutheran College (now Augustana University College) where they worked for many years, both as students and assistant leaders, under the guidance of Dr. Gary Gibson. During their apprenticeships they learned the importance of interpersonal relations and have become skilled in facilitating warm interactive wilderness living environments.

### Hypotheses of the Comparative Investigation

The two hypotheses for the investigation are presented as follows:

1. Both the enriched and standard groups will experience different degrees of closeness to both their respective trip and tent group members on the post-trip measurement. In addition, post-trip measures of closeness of both trip and tent groups will be significantly different than respective pre-trip measures.

Closeness in an interpersonal relationship is operationally defined by Jourard (1971) as the amount of personal information individuals mutually shared, including such feelings and emotions as affection, love or trust that prevail between two or more people.

2. The mean scores of the enriched group will be significantly different from the mean scores of the standard group on all post-test measures.

### Delimitations of the Study

The subjects involved in the study consisted of 55 male and female undergraduate students who participated in a

compulsory weekend canoe trip for an introductory outdoor education class. Since random sampling from the target population (university students) was not possible, generalizations are confined to the experimentally accessible population.

### Limitations of the Study

i) A possible limitation of this investigation includes the potential of unequal group cohesiveness between groups prior to the outdoor experience. This limitation may result from the fact that the groups travelled at different times in relation to the start of their outdoor education course. The enriched group had a greater opportunity to interact with peers during an extra week of classroom and outdoor laboratory experiences.

ii) Random assignment of subjects for this study was not possible due to the need to schedule students into particular laboratory groups in order to accommodate their personal timetables.

iii) The questionnaire used in this study was designed specifically for this investigation and relied heavily on face validity (Robinson & Neutens, 1987).

iv) The investigation was a true field study. Therefore variables such as weather, group differences and possible "X" factors (unexpected events) were beyond the control of the researcher.

#### Treatment of Subjects

Fifty-six male and female students, enrolled in an introductory outdoor education course (PESS 180, Fall, 1991) at the University of Alberta, agreed to serve as volunteer subjects for this study. The researched weekend canoe trip formed a compulsory component of the PESS 180 course. One male student from the standard group failed to complete the post-experience questionnaire and was subsequently withdrawn from the study. Enriched (n=28) and standard (n=27) groups were drawn from two separate intact trip (lab) groups.

This quasi-experimental population was not a self-selected group due to the compulsory nature of the trip for successful completion of the course. The value of mandatory participants, as suggested by Kolb (1988), is that the study has a better representation of change resistance. Individuals who voluntarily partake in an outdoor experience may be more open to change or self-improvement as demonstrated by their preparedness to enroll voluntarily. It may be argued that students in this study did register in

the physical education degree route knowing full well that they would be involved to some degree in outdoor education. However, for most, the PESS 180 course was their only academic exposure to the out-of-doors. The vast majority of students partook in the experience solely because it was a required component of the course and their undergraduate degree.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used in the quantitative study was a pre-test/post-test questionnaire developed by myself (Appendix B). The 35 item, Likert-type scale questionnaire was divided into four pre-test questions and 31 post-test questions. The post-test questionnaire was separated into two parts. The first section measured general feelings towards oneself, peers and the journey. The second section evaluated the extent to which specific elements of the trip contributed to help the subjects learn more about themselves and others.

The questionnaire was not tested for reliability or validity. To minimize potential threats to internal validity every possible effort was made to ensure that both canoe trips were as identical to each other as possible. However, due to the many extraneous variables found outside

a laboratory, internal validity of a field study is extremely difficult to achieve (Rubinson & Neutens, 1987). In this study the main threats to internal validity included history (such as varying environmental conditions and students' academic responsibilities) and contamination (leaders may have inadvertently influenced the students' responses).

#### Methods and Procedures

Two weeks prior to the investigation I visited the two trip groups selected for the study to explain the nature and procedures of the research. At this time the students were informed that individuals who volunteer for the study would be expected to complete a pre- and post-test questionnaire as well as maintain a log book or diary for the duration of their weekend journey. In addition, the students were notified that volunteers were free to decline involvement at any time throughout the study without repercussion, as the University ethical review process requires. The subjects were assured that information provided by them would remain confidential through the use of personal codes. The purposes of the study were not disclosed to the subjects in order to avoid a possible Hawthorne effect. Neither group was informed that their particular weekend trip might differ from that of other groups. At that time individuals



volunteering for the study were required to complete a consent form (Appendix A).

Immediately prior to departing on their weekend trip, subjects completed the pre-test questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered in a classroom without interference or distraction. The post-test questionnaire was conducted in the same classroom during the respective trip groups' lab time. The standard and enriched groups completed the post-test questionnaire 20 and 44 hours, respectively, after their return from the trip. This difference of elapsed time from the end of the trip to the post-test among the groups may be a limitation of the study. However, the 20 - 44 hour time lapse in the students' responses may have afforded them more opportunity to reflect upon their experience and respond to the post-questionnaire more cognitively than would have been possible had the responses taken place immediately following the canoe trip. Besides the treatment effects (Appendix F) and the slight variations in environmental conditions found between groups outlined in the preceding chapter, the standard group was comparable to the enriched group in all respects.

#### Statistical design and analysis.

A two way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare two enriched and standard groups' pre- and post-test

scores. All other enriched and standard group post-test scores were compared using independent student t-tests. Even for nonparametric data, sample distributions approach normality with sample sizes greater than 20 and thus enable the student t-test to be used (Neutens & Robinson, 1987). An a priori probability level of .05 was adopted for all comparisons.

### Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the comparative influence of programmed activities promoting team-building, self-disclosure and reflection (such as cooperative games and sharing circles) on students' personal growth as a function of participating in a large group, wilderness weekend canoe tripping experience. The dependent variables included scores attained on a pre-trip and post-trip questionnaire.

#### Closeness towards members of the group before and after the experience.

Means and standard deviations measuring closeness towards members of trip and tent groups of the enriched and standard groups before and after the trip (questions 7 & 14, and 8 & 15, respectively) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Feelings of Closeness  
Towards Members of Trip (lab) and Tent Groups Over Time

| Condition          | Pre-Test |     | Post-Test |     |
|--------------------|----------|-----|-----------|-----|
|                    | Mean     | SD  | Mean      | SD  |
| <u>Trip Groups</u> |          |     |           |     |
| Enriched           | 2.6      | 1.0 | 4.3       | 0.7 |
| Standard           | 2.4      | 1.1 | 3.8       | 0.8 |
| <u>Tent Groups</u> |          |     |           |     |
| Enriched           | 3.4      | 1.4 | 4.4       | 0.9 |
| Standard           | 3.4      | 1.2 | 4.6       | 0.7 |

An ANOVA of feelings of closeness towards members of trip and tent groups of the enriched and standard groups over time (questions 7 & 14, and 8 & 15, respectively) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

ANOVA of Feelings of Closeness Toward Members of Trip (lab) and Tent Group Members Over Time

| Source of Variance | df | MS    | F     | P    |
|--------------------|----|-------|-------|------|
| <u>Trip Groups</u> |    |       |       |      |
| Groups             | 1  | 2.77  | 3.10  | .08  |
| Time               | 1  | 64.14 | 71.93 | .00* |
| Groups X Time      | 1  | .38   | .43   | .52  |
| <u>Tent Groups</u> |    |       |       |      |
| Groups             | 1  | .56   | .45   | .51  |
| Time               | 1  | 32.73 | 26.22 | .00* |
| Groups X Time      | 1  | .09   | .07   | .79  |

The enriched and standard groups both experienced significant increases in feelings of closeness toward their respective trip and tent group members over time ( $p < .05$ ); however, there were no significant differences in measures of closeness between the enriched and standard trip groups. Similarly, there were no significant differences ( $p > .05$ ) in measures of closeness between the enriched and standard groups toward their respective tent group members.

Emotions toward self, others and the trip.

Mean scores and standard deviations for the enriched and standard groups' post-trip emotions toward self, other and the trip are presented in Table 3. Question numbers in Table 3 correspond to those found in the post-questionnaire (Appendix B). Independent student t-tests were performed in order to determine if the differences between the enriched and standard groups reached statistical significance. With the exception of question #13, (which asked, "Overall, how effective was your tent group in coordinating and cooperating to carry out its basic tasks of setting up camp, cooking, etcetera?), none of the questions demonstrated significant ( $p > .05$ ) differences.

Table 3

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Post-Trip Emotions  
Toward Self, Other and Trip

| Question/Group | Mean | S.D. | t     | p    |
|----------------|------|------|-------|------|
| 9.             |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 4.5  | 0.7  |       |      |
| Enriched       | 4.5  | 0.6  | -0.30 | .76  |
| 10.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 3.7  | 0.9  |       |      |
| Enriched       | 4.0  | 0.9  | -1.37 | .17  |
| 11.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 5.0  | 0.8  |       |      |
| Enriched       | 4.9  | 0.8  | 0.16  | .87  |
| 12.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 5.2  | 0.5  |       |      |
| Enriched       | 5.1  | 0.6  | 0.29  | .77  |
| 13.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 5.3  | 0.7  |       |      |
| Enriched       | 4.8  | 0.7  | 2.67  | .01* |
| 16.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 3.3  | 1.1  |       |      |
| Enriched       | 2.9  | 1.1  | 1.36  | .17  |
| 17.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 4.5  | 1.1  |       |      |
| Enriched       | 4.2  | 1.4  | 0.98  | .32  |
| 18.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 3.2  | 1.1  |       |      |
| Enriched       | 3.6  | 0.9  | -1.39 | .16  |
| 19.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 5.0  | 0.8  | --    | -    |
| Enriched       | 4.8  | 0.9  | 0.74  | .46  |
| 20.            |      |      |       |      |
| Standard       | 4.6  | 0.8  | --    | -    |
| Enriched       | 4.4  | 1.0  | 0.48  | .62  |

Contribution of trip elements towards learning,  
enjoyment and growth.

Means and standard deviations of the contribution of trip elements towards learning, enjoyment and growth for both the enriched and standard groups, as well as the elements' respective rankings by group are presented in Table 4. These results pertain only to question 21 of the questionnaire (Appendix B). Independent student t-tests were performed on each of the elements in order to detect if significant differences between the enriched and standard groups existed. With the exception of the 'closing circle', all of the following elements (Table 4) failed to detect significant differences between groups ( $p > .05$ ).



Table 4

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Rankings for  
Contribution of Trip Elements (question #21)

| Question       |         | Mean | SD  | Rank | t     | p    |
|----------------|---------|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| J. Rest stops  | Enrich. | 5.1  | 0.9 | 1    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.6  | 1.0 | 4    | -1.88 | .06  |
| I. Canoeing    | Enrich. | 4.9  | 1.1 | 2    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.6  | 1.0 | 4    | -0.97 | .33  |
| A. Coop games  | Enrich. | 4.9  | 0.5 | 2    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.7  | 1.1 | 3    | -0.94 | .35  |
| B. Campfire g. | Enrich. | 4.7  | 0.9 | 3    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 5.1  | 0.7 | 1    | 1.47  | .14  |
| O. Mini-solo   | Enrich. | 4.7  | 1.0 | 3    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | ---  | --- | ---  | --    | --   |
| E. Trust       | Enrich. | 4.6  | 1.1 | 4    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.7  | 1.0 | 3    | 0.31  | .75  |
| N. Leaders     | Enrich. | 4.6  | 1.3 | 4    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.7  | 1.3 | 3    | 0.36  | .71  |
| D. Responsible | Enrich. | 4.5  | 1.0 | 5    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.4  | 1.0 | 5    | -0.44 | .65  |
| C. Free fire   | Enrich. | 4.4  | 1.2 | 6    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.8  | 1.0 | 2    | 1.3   | .17  |
| T. Wind        | Enrich. | 4.3  | 1.3 | 7    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | --   | --  | --   | --    | -    |
| S. Blindfold   | Enrich. | 4.1  | 1.5 | 8    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | --   | --  | --   | --    | -    |
| U. Fears       | Enrich. | 4.1  | 1.0 | 8    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 3.8  | 1.2 | 8    | -0.70 | .48  |
| H. Meal time   | Enrich. | 4.0  | 1.1 | 9    |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.6  | 1.0 | 4    | 1.83  | .07  |
| M. Debrief     | Enrich. | 3.9  | 1.0 | 10   |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | --   | --  | --   | --    | -    |
| Q. Set up camp | Enrich. | 3.9  | 1.0 | 10   |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.2  | 1.1 | 6    | 1.06  | .29  |
| R. Object      | Enrich. | 3.8  | 1.0 | 11   |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 3.6  | 1.2 | 9    | -0.52 | .60  |
| P. Idle time   | Enrich. | 3.7  | 1.2 | 12   |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.1  | 1.1 | 6    | 1.32  | .19  |
| G. Thought     | Enrich. | 3.6  | 1.4 | 13   |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | --   | --  | --   | --    | -    |
| F. Closing Cr. | Enrich. | 3.5  | 1.1 | 14   |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 4.7  | 1.1 | 3    | 3.6   | .00* |
| K. Presentat.  | Enrich. | 3.4  | 1.1 | 15   |       |      |
|                | Stand.  | 3.5  | 0.8 | 10   | 0.32  | .74  |

Enrich. = Enriched Group

Stand. = Standard Group

## Discussion

### Closeness towards members of the group before and after the experience.

As hypothesized, significant differences were detected between pre- and post-test measures among groups in their feelings of closeness toward members of their respective tent and trip groups. These results indicate that short term wilderness experiences, accommodating large groups, significantly enhance participants feelings of closeness toward one another, not only in the small tent groups but toward the entire trip group as well.

These results are vitally important. They demonstrate that university students who are well led during short-term, large group wilderness programmes, generally experience a significant increase in their level of mutual self-disclosure and emotions of affection for and trust of one another. Independent of their particular programmes, both the standard and enriched groups grew significantly in this regard. These findings have many practical implications. For example, the majority of university students spend copious amounts of time in classes with peers but seldom relate to many of them on a meaningful basis. Society accepts and often promotes this large degree of social distance where individuals rarely grant themselves

opportunities to develop relationships with and be themselves around the majority of their peers. Consequently, individuals in groups are seldom able to realize their collective potential, thus reducing the potential for enriched opportunities of time shared together. Weekend wilderness group experiences, as demonstrated by this study, can intensify interpersonal relations and, as one may speculate, open participants to a richer and more meaningful life.

But what were the reasons for this profound shift in feelings of closeness toward one another that was experienced by both groups over a weekend? Was it simply a fact of sharing fifty hours together? Was it the physical and social challenges encountered during the weekend or, perhaps, the novelty of the experience? Could it have been the leaders methodologies, the activities, or, was it the magical, humbling qualities of wilderness? Unfortunately, the questionnaire is limited in its ability to answer these important questions; however, I would speculate that a combination of all of the aforementioned points were influential to varying degrees. The essence of the results were that weekend wilderness trips can rapidly facilitate positive feelings of interpersonal closeness among group members.

It must also be noted that within the limitations of the present study, the effects of the programmed activities employed in the investigation to enhance feelings of closeness between group members were not detectable between the groups through the questionnaire. According to Cohen (1988) as well as Robinson and Neutens (1987), it is most difficult to gain significant differences between groups with such small sample sizes. It is, therefore, likely that due to the confounding factors influencing the study, (such as small sample size, non-randomization, environmental conditions, and the questionnaire), the power to detect significant differences was greatly reduced. At this level there appeared to be no influence; however, it does not preclude the possibility that such an influence may be detected with a larger sample size and a stronger design that would reduce the threats to internal and external validity.

These result, however, should not be interpreted to suggest that formal group activities that promote cooperation and reflection are not valuable. While the curriculum did vary significantly between the standard and enriched groups, the nature of the cooperative and open atmosphere the leaders epitomized and encouraged most likely compensated for the lack of formal group sharing and cooperative activities the standard group experienced.

Therefore, the influence of the warm and sensitive leadership demonstrated by Martin and Ann was plausibly a more potent influence for the students than the formal treatment effects.

Emotions toward self, others and the trip.

Within the limitations of the study, the effects of the programmed activities to change the students feelings toward themselves or others were not detectable between the groups through the questionnaire, with the exception of question #13. Furthermore, no significant differences were found between groups on the level of challenge, meaning or enjoyment they ascribed to their respective trips.

The results of question #13, however, demonstrated that the standard group felt that they were significantly ( $p < .05$ ) more effective as a tent group than the enriched group in coordinating and cooperating to carry out their basic tent-group tasks. This may be attributed to the fact that during the standard group's canoe trip, the students were provided with fewer organized activities promoting reflection, self-disclosure and team-building, (such as cooperative games, sharing circles and the mini-solo), than the enriched group. Instead, the standard group was given far more time to set up camp and eat in their tent groups than the enriched group. The standard group, therefore, had a great deal more

casual time with their tent group members than did the enriched group. Hence, the standard group had more opportunities to informally socialize and complete basic tasks as a tent group than the enriched group.

This result demonstrates that the importance and value of unstructured time during a wilderness experience cannot be underestimated. Time spent with tent-group members partaking in camp chores, sharing meals or spontaneously socializing provides invaluable informal opportunities for small group interaction distanced from the distractions of the large group and the modern technology of everyday life. Living in wilderness, travellers appreciate the freedom wilderness represents to choose how they will spend their limited amount of free time. Obviously, for educational purposes, a balance must be struck between programmed and unstructured time. The ratio of free time to programmed time should be dependent upon a number of factors, including goals and objectives of the programme, maturity of the campers, skill level of the leadership team, energy and interests of the group and the environment.

Contribution of trip elements toward learning,  
enjoyment and growth.

The effects of trip elements toward learning, enjoyment and growth during the investigation, with the exception of



the closing circle, were not detectable between the groups through the questionnaire. The only element of the trip reported to be significantly ( $p < .05$ ) different between the two groups was the closing circle. The standard group felt that the closing circle contributed largely in helping them to learn more about themselves and other group members. The enriched group was less enthusiastic about the closing circle than the standard group. As previously stated, the standard group's exposure to formal activities was limited. The only organized activity promoting reflection and self-disclosure for this group was the closing circle which took place towards the conclusion of the trip. This circle was the first and only formal opportunity the standard group members had to publicly express themselves; however, for the enriched group the closing circle was just one of many organized occasions designed to foster public expression of personal thoughts and feelings. It seems logical then, that the standard group appreciated this novel opportunity more than the enriched group and felt it contributed a great deal to their wilderness experience. It is possible that the enriched group may have become saturated by the frequency of their group sharing sessions performed during the weekend trip and the impact or value of these experiences was consequently diminished. It is, therefore, important for outdoor leaders to remain sensitive to the possibility of



over-programming activities and constantly remain flexible in attaining a balance of formal and informal experiences.

Through these results one may speculate that encouraged reflection and appropriate self-disclosure during a wilderness experience seemed to amplify the meaning, learning and subsequently personal growth derived from such a journey. These sharing activities seemed to foster novel feelings rarely obtained in everyday life. These novel feelings were a result of the uniqueness of the experience, where in wilderness the self came through to a far greater extent than in everyday life. Here, the leaders did not define the situation for the students and, instead, encouraged the students to make their own choices. Consequently, it is plausible that appropriate amounts of formal encouragement to openly reflect upon experiences and appropriately disclose personal thoughts and feelings may be an important component of wilderness trips. These activities may help participants to become more aware of their own feelings and those of others. Furthermore, these formal sharing activities may help participants to become more aware of the advantages of communicating more openly to others. Personal communication skills, enhanced during a wilderness experience, can be readily transferred with participants out of their wilderness setting and into their everyday lives.

The results of the standard group feeling so positive about their closing circle demonstrates the vital importance of wilderness leaders to focus their participants on how they, in their life-worlds, objectify, interpret and make sense of their experiences. This dialectic process can demonstrate to participants how the self constitutes the other. In this operation the role of the instructor is not a conventional one of assigning preconceived roles to participants, but rather, by giving space to participants to allow the dialectic process to individually unfold so participants can better interpret their situations. For example, when the group was canoeing into the wind and large swells, the leaders did not stop the group and tell them how to accomplish their task. For example, Martin or Anne did not dictate, "Follow my boat. Do exactly what I do". Instead, within a framework of safety, they allowed the students to experience the situation on their own with only their biographies, (which included previous canoe instruction), to deal with the predicament. Through this methodology the students were forced to rely on and bring their background experiences of self into context in association with the views of their partners during the harrowing canoeing conditions. They were compelled to make choices under stressful circumstances to directly influence their individual reality--a very meaningful learning and growing opportunity. This educational situation was allowed

to unfold because the leaders provided the students with individual, undetermined space to make their decisions and experience this freedom. In other words, they were given the autonomy to make choices using their own background of experiences in the context of "what-ever is going on at the time." Then, during the reflective sessions they were encouraged to use their biography of experiences to make sense of, to interpret, what they experienced. This process helped them to become more aware of how they constructed and interpreted their reality and ultimately gave them more control over and insight into how they objectify their social reality. The important point is that it was the giving of individual space and the encouragement of the self to emerge that openly set in motion the enriching dialectic process between self and other.

While of no statistical significance, it is interesting to note the trip elements that were most highly ranked for their contribution to the trip. These included campfire time, rest stops, canoeing, cooperative games, the closing circles, the mini-solo, the leaders and trust. Most of these elements are of a social and/or reflective nature.

It appears that the questionnaire employed for this study was not able to definitively differentiate between the two experiences, one manipulating the experience through the

use of group bonding activities and encouraged self-disclosure, and the other providing somewhat of a traditional experience. The questionnaire found few significant differences between the enriched and standard groups' perceptions of their growth during their wilderness experiences. The lived experience of the weekend canoe trip was a novelty to the vast majority of students in both groups. Few individuals in either group had ever travelled in the wilderness with their personal gear for two consecutive days or more. For most participants their respective journeys represented a profoundly novel social and emotional reality from their everyday life. The novelty of the situation provided most students with little basis for comparison. Both groups had extremely positive experiences and by the trips' end found themselves feeling significantly closer to their group members than before the trip. With little base available for comparison, students from both groups expressed these feelings with relatively high scores on the post-test questionnaire.

One may speculate that, due to the novelty of the experience, the groups demonstrated a ceiling effect in their responses. Ewert (1983a), in his research analysis of outdoor education and self-concept, found the ceiling effect to be a common difficulty among outdoor research. It is plausible that the newness of the journeys seemed to have

inhibited the questionnaire from accurately detecting some forms of growth that incurred through the experience.

This quantitative study has demonstrated that both weekend experiences had profound impacts upon their respective groups' feelings of closeness toward their group members. Several positive outcomes were identified from both journeys although few significant differences between groups were evident. With the results of the quantitative study in hand, a qualitative investigation, exploring the meaning of the lived weekend experience for students, may provide for a more robust detection and richer understanding of the impact of a brief wilderness experience with a large group. Therefore, in order to more fully understand the students' experiences, the following qualitative study investigated the enriched group's wilderness journey, with less breadth and greater depth than the quantitative study, through the use of phenomenological methodologies.

CHAPTER V  
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE IN-DEPTH STUDY  
OF THE ENRICHED GROUP'S JOURNEY

Rationale

The preceding comparative study of the two groups' (standard and enriched) journeys has attempted to derive "subject-free" or "objective" knowledge of intra- and interpersonal personal growth attained during the weekend wilderness experience; however, this positivist methodology has proven to be limited in furthering our understanding of the complexity of students' wilderness journeys. In Burton and Jackson's (1990) review of leisure studies they cautioned an over-reliance of leisure research methods upon surveys and statistical analyses and suggested that, in particular instances, anti-positivistic methods may be more appropriate. They also suggested that in some situations, qualitative methods may act as a useful supplement to positivistic procedures. Furthermore, Kolb (1991) stressed that qualitative methods are particularly valuable in experiential settings, such as in this study, where each participant has a unique position in and outlook on their wilderness journey.

Recognizing the limitations of quantitative research methods Schutz (1973, p.XLVI) also advocated the qualitative approach. He stated that "the particular methodological devices developed by the social sciences in order to grasp social reality are better suited than those of the natural sciences to lead to the discovery of the general principles which govern all human knowledge." Echoing this philosophy, Legault (1991) pointed out that the qualitative method of inquiry can generate "a better understanding of profound meanings of the educational experience in a wilderness environment."

Both natural and social scientists may attempt to address the same question; however, the realities investigated by their two distinct methods are qualitatively and fundamentally different. It must be acknowledged that people are,

not only elements of the scientist's field of observation but pre-interpreters of their own field of action, that their overt conduct is only a fragment of their total behaviour, that the first challenge given to those who seek to understand social reality is to comprehend the subjectivity of the actor by grasping the meaning an act has for him, the axis of the social world ... the social scientist's task is the reconstruction of the way in which men [and women] in



daily life interpret their own world (Natanson, 1973, p. XLVI).

With this in mind, in order to overcome the limits of the quantitative study and derive a richer understanding of the students' wilderness weekend experience, a qualitative, phenomenological research method was also employed. As few statistical differences were found between the standard and enriched groups, and in order to explore the wilderness experience as wholly as possible, the qualitative portion of the study investigated only the enriched group's weekend experience. Kolb (1991) claimed that it is usually desirable to limit qualitative research to one group in order to gain as much information as possible rather than allocate time and resources to a control group which, in any event, seldom produce accurate comparisons for programmes.

Berger and Luckman (1966) consider phenomenological analysis to be the method best suited to clarify the inner perspective or knowledge of a lived experience. A purely descriptive method, phenomenology aims to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1990). It provides insights into a phenomenon that facilitate a more wholistic understanding of a lived experience. Van Manen argued that "modern thinking and scholarship is so caught up in theoretical and

technological thought that the programme of a phenomenological human science may strike an individual breakthrough and a liberation." This is possible because phenomenological research focuses on the whole of the lived experience, including the objectifications and interpretive process individuals assign to their experience. For, as Polkinghorne (1981) advocated, the source of the experience lies within consciousness itself and encompasses far more than precise responses to experimentally applied stimuli.

Hence, the aim of the qualitative portion of the investigation is to further our understanding of the meanings university students ascribe to their participation in a wilderness weekend canoe journey with 27 classmates and two skilled outdoor leaders.

#### Co-Researchers

At the time the study was first presented to the students they were informed that, further to the questionnaire and personal journal, a more in-depth study would also take place. They were told that this concentrated investigation would require only a handful of volunteers but would be more time consuming for them than the quantitative investigation. Fifteen students from the enriched programme group volunteered to partake in the

qualitative portion of the study. With the assistance of the group's lab instructor, two females and three males were selected. These five volunteers were chosen on the basis of their lab instructor's perceptions of their ability to illuminate the essence of their wilderness lived experience with as much clarity and depth as possible. Furthermore, the selection of these volunteers, as suggested by Plummer (1983), involved additional criteria, such as their ability to identify a level of awareness and articulate their experiences, perceptions, thoughts, or insights about their weekend trip. Although I recognized some of the volunteers, none were known to me prior to the study. Through the course of several meetings with me, these five volunteers acted as my co-researchers; they worked with me to capture the essence of their wilderness journey.

A sample size of five was selected in order to attain as much depth and richness as possible while still attempting to attain, albeit slightly, some degree of breadth. The sample size by no means approached that required of quantitative investigations seeking generalization; instead, this study attempted to gain a deeper, richer understanding of the nature or meaning of the co-researchers' weekend lived experience. In the introductions to the co-researchers' protocols (Chapter VI) a short biographical description of each is included.

### Methods and Procedures

The method of triangulation was also used in the qualitative portion of this study. The value of this triangulation, as discussed in Chapter I, was that it provided greater and better evidence from which meaningful propositions about the outdoor experience could be constructed (Mathison, 1988). In Denzin's (1978, p.28) advocacy of triangulation he stated, "Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed." This premise, that a combination of viewpoints or methods will yield greater accuracy, led me to analyze the problem using multiple points of reference. These various attitudes included one pre- and post-interview, two validity check interviews, and written journal analyses, as well as responses to open questions in the pre- and post-questionnaires from each co-researcher. Additionally, three interviews with both trip leaders were conducted. Since the enriched programme emphasized the verbal processing of the experience, it seemed natural to extend this process to interview the co-researchers to gain their meaningful thoughts, feelings and emotions from their experience. The journal analysis represented another powerful source of data where written questions (Appendix C) helped to guide the students' written reflections. Furthermore, my involvement

as a participant observer on the weekend experience was critical to provide a view of the journey through the eyes of a participant, for the best way to understand a culture is to live it.

The aforementioned methodologies assisted me to view the data from several unique positions; from several students' perspectives, from two leaders' viewpoints, and from my own participation and observations. The meanings of the experiences were consequently far better understood from these multiple points of view, as each attitude offered a distinctive picture (Schutz, 1973). Hence, while the number of individuals who contributed to the data was much narrower than that of the preceding quantitative portion of the study, the data field for this phenomenological investigation was much deeper.

As explained, each co-researcher was interviewed on four separate occasions: one-to-four days before and after their canoe journey, as well as five and six months after their trip. Open ended, semi-standardized interview techniques, as described by Berg (1989) were employed. This type of interview involved the use of a number of predetermined questions; however, it also offered me the flexibility to encourage interviewees to probe far beyond their original responses. All interviews were taped and

transcribed as suggested by Plummer (1983) and P. Rafferty (personal communication, March, 1991).

As mentioned, in order to gain a better understanding of the students' perspectives on the journey, I partook in the experience as a participant observer. I paddled with many of the students, I ate with them and participated in all of their activities, including the sharing circles. I was not involved in the leadership of the experience and actively distanced myself from any type of leadership role. This position was unique for me. Over the past fifteen years I have participated in countless outdoor journeys with students and peers. The vast majority of these has seen me in a leadership role. During this study I had the luxury of abdicating any kind leadership and responsibility to Martin and Anne. This refreshing position liberated me to see and understand the experience from a rare and informative perspective.

During the canoe trip I made frequent notes of my observations, thoughts and feelings. I constantly recorded my reactions to and descriptions of the experience, as well as the meanings and significance of the event, into a tiny cassette recorder. I also recorded my insights, interpretations, analyses and recommendations. Furthermore, I taped many conversations with students and leaders in the



field. All taped verbatim was transcribed to assist in the analysis.

In order to validate my interpretations and learn of any changes or realizations that may have occurred since the trip, I met individually with each co-researcher five months after the trip and gave them a copy of my thematic analyses and interpretive synthesis of their personal experience. They were asked to read this material to ensure its accuracy and provide me with any additional relevant information. A few weeks later we met again to discuss the written material as well as their thoughts of the trip six months after the fact.

A thematic analysis was carried out on each co-researchers' data, including their interviews, journals and questionnaires. Throughout this exhaustive analysis I continually asked myself, as suggested by Van Manen (1990), 'What is this portion of data an example of?' I remained open and coded all ideas, later grouping them into themes of common thoughts. Each of the co-researchers' emerging themes were clustered under three possible second order themes. (These clusters are presented in the co-researchers' respective syntheses). I then began the creative process of writing and re-writing an interpretive synthesis for each co-researcher, eventually producing a



text, known as phenomenological description. Such descriptions elucidate "those phenomenological structural features of a phenomenon that help to make visible, as it were, that which constitutes the nature or essence of the phenomenon" or experience (Van Manen, 1990, p. 122).

In my attempt to uncover the essence of the co-researchers' experiences I invite the reader, in the following chapter (Chapter IV), to journey the same paths as the co-researchers and consequently understand their journey from their perspective as fully and richly as possible. For these new or more developed representations about what the students' wilderness weekend journey with a large group meant to them, in its essence, becomes a new resource that induces a new way of conceptualizing and improving these types of experiences.

### Bracketing

"Phenomenological research seeks to develop pre-suppositionless, structural descriptions of what is given in the experience" (Polkinghorne, 1981, p.4) To accomplish these understandings and enable the reader to assess the validity of my interpretations of the following data, it is necessary for me to document my predispositions in relation to the researched phenomena (Osbourne, 1988). Polkinghorne

(1981) explained that this spelling out of the researcher's expectations assists in the control of the researcher's notions or biases. Van Manen (1990) described this vital act as suspending one's various beliefs in order to study the essential structures of the lived experience. I will, therefore, now attempt to lay out my expectations and prejudgments as rigorously and honestly as possible. While I have attempted to disclose these notions and subsequently interpret the data as objectively as possible, my personal biases cannot help but colour my interpretations.

Cordial human relations and living in the wilderness have always been extremely significant to me. I can easily trace these values back to my childhood, where, throughout my younger years I was taught that our most valuable resources in life are but two: the caring and respect for one another as well as for the natural world. Our duality with the natural world, our co-existence in this world, has been and always will be interrelated with all living matter. Both of these elements (people and the natural world) have never ceased to bring immense joy and meaning into my life. While independently, individuals and nature enrich my life, it is the combination of healthy interpersonal relations in wilderness that is extremely significant and meaningful to me. Their interrelated meaning for me is far richer than merely summated. I believe that wilderness complements and

embellishes intra- and interpersonal growth. Distanced from the social rules of everyday life, wilderness encourages individuals to use their unique biographies to make interactive choices with the self and others in nature in order to accomplish individual and collective goals. Realizing the magical duality of people sharing, learning and growing in the natural world, I have had the great fortune of combining the two in my profession. This career of sharing time with people in wilderness leads me on my personal vision quest; assisting people to grow, pursue happiness and gain meaning and fulfilment through living, sharing and being in the natural world.

As an outdoor educator I have led numerous wilderness trips with students. I have always been fascinated by the tremendous intra- and interpersonal growth that usually takes place during these journeys. Immersed in a quality wilderness experience students usually rise out of their shells, feel more confident about themselves and open themselves and become closer to others. Relationships often blossom and grow in quantum leaps. I believe these magic-like moments are derived from students living and working together in a natural environment. Nature offers an incredibly potent teaching milieu that is virtually ignored in our society. I am convinced that students living in wilderness, if guided and nurtured in a sensitive manner,

will undoubtedly experience tremendous growth, often unparalleled in everyday life. But I am unclear about what this experience really means to them. How do they truly feel before, during and after the experience and what is it about the trip that promotes this rapid growth?

## CHAPTER VI

### MANY PATHS ON A SINGLE JOURNEY

#### Many Paths

In this chapter my descriptions and interpretations of the co-researchers personal paths are presented. Examples of the data, by way of verbatim, are also included. I have attempted to write them in a way that the reader will be able to recognize them as an experience that they have had or could have had. Van Manen (1990) emphasized that good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience. It is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience. Thus it is referred to as the validating circle of inquiry.

The purpose of this research was to explore, describe and seek out the meaning of the co-researchers' wilderness weekend lived experience. Pre- and post-experience interviews with each co-researcher in addition to their field journals and questionnaires provided data describing their experiences. All data for each co-researcher were analyzed and openly coded into themes. All examples of each co-researchers' themes were recorded under their specific thematic headings and subsequently clustered into three common categories. These themes and corresponding verbatim

provided the foundation for the following description of each co-researchers' unique path and interpretive synthesis of their personal wilderness journey.

Karen's Path

Karen, a native of downtown Toronto, moved to rural Nova Scotia at the age of ten. During the three years she resided in her Maritime home, Karen enjoyed living more in touch with the natural world. She vividly recalled playing in the apple orchards and leading a child's outdoor life. She looked back on her three brief years in Nova Scotia as an important developmental time where her love for solitude in natural spaces took root. Since her move to Trenton, Ontario and subsequently to Edmonton, Karen has had few natural outdoor experiences, save for occasional day hikes with her father. Now at university, yearning for her younger, former days, Karen expressed her feelings of going "ape" during the wilderness weekend experience. "I just love it" she said, "I feel so natural; I feel bare."

Karen's main athletic interest is swimming, in which she is a frequent participant. Karen is anxious to complete her undergraduate degree, get married and become a mother. "I want to see what I'll be like" she expressed. Karen, with few recognized role models, aspires to make positive influences on people and help others make important decisions in their lives. A hard working, task oriented young woman, Karen has strong values and a clear sense of her life's



direction. My sense is that Karen will more than fulfil her aspirations.

During our first meeting Karen was clearly excited about the coming trip; however, her enthusiasm was severely tainted by the responsibilities of work and study time that would be lost. She felt tension between the dichotomies of needing to experience the therapeutic aspects of nature and needing to satisfy her academic responsibilities. Karen believed that one could only be gained at the expense of the other. Her desire though, to temporarily escape many of her academic obligations, helped Karen to embark on the journey with her usual positive attitude.

Table 5 displays a list of themes derived from Karen's wilderness weekend canoe journey.

Table 5

Clusters of Karen's Themes

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Valuing Nature   | Appreciation of Natural Environment<br>Valuing the Natural Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Self-Discovery   | Personal Calming--Solitude<br>Clarification of Personal Values and<br>Awareness of Self<br>Empowerment Through Accomplishment<br>and Responsibility<br>Coping with the Challenge<br>Perceived Threats to Personal Well Being<br>Profound Positive Emotions<br>Tension over Lost Study Time |
| Self with Others | Evaluation of Self to Peers<br>Closeness to Others through Shared<br>Common Experience<br>Uncovering Real Others<br>Social Bonding (Cohesion)<br>Sharing of Selves<br>Elusiveness of Escape from Daily Life<br>Cooperation                                                                 |

Interpretive synthesis of Karen's experience.

At the beginning of our first post-trip meeting I asked Karen what she thought of the trip. "Great ... excellent" she exclaimed, almost leaping out of the chair with an expressive glow. All I could think of was that if eyes are regarded as mirrors of the soul, then Karen's experience was certainly a profound one. From that point forward, as if leading me by the hand, Karen and I embarked on an exciting journey exploring the significance of her subjective weekend lived experience.

Valuing Nature:

Being and living in a natural environment was of deep significance for Karen. Karen appreciated and valued many of the simpler aspects of nature and was grateful to be a part of it and felt a cohesive interrelationship with it. The coloured trees, the blue sky, the flowing water, the wind; elements such as these reached out and spoke to her. Karen heard the land plea for help and appeal to be neither taken for granted nor abused. Prior to the trip Karen knew that environmental problems existed but she perceived none to have affected her personally. Now, for the first time, she came face to face with an ugly and profoundly disturbing reality. Karen suddenly began to understand that she was no

longer living in her former preconstructed fantasy world. She discovered that environmental problems do exist, that they affect her directly and that they must be reconciled. "This isn't right", she stated, "I just wish people realized how important it is.... I feel ashamed as a human." In talking to Karen six months after the trip she cited environmental awareness as one of the most important elements of the trip and claimed with passion that "the trip made me change my lifestyle."

The weekend wilderness experience was certainly an influential one for Karen, altering her values toward the environment and positively affecting her way of life; however, the most meaningful aspect of the weekend experience for Karen was self discovery through introspection.

#### Self-Discovery:

Prior to the trip Karen admitted to me that she really did not want to partake in it. She seemed filled with inner tension--excited to be going but fearful of losing valuable study time. "I was panicking because I had this weekend that was getting taken away from me", she stated, "and the weekend ended up being my saviour for the week because I could stop." The trip encouraged Karen to enter a sphere of

being into which she had never penetrated. In the natural setting, removed from the constraints of everyday life, Karen granted herself the rare luxury of mental relaxation and allowed her body and mind to flow with that of nature's. She appreciated and took full advantage of this time of solitude and yielded her mind to explore her past and future. "The natural setting ... had a drastic effect on me in that I really ... relaxed" for the first time in months. She found her time away from home "not simply a break from mental and intellectual thinking, it was more for the spiritual and emotional reasons."

During this tranquil new-found state the clarity of Karen's values began to emerge. As if awakened from a deep slumber Karen started to place critical personal, social and spiritual issues into perspective. "We are not thankful for what we have. My altered life's perspective is that you only live once. Why go through life full of stress and concern?" She came to recognize that she had been leading a stressful life of self-imposed imprisonment by not allowing herself the necessary personal time for reflection.

This trip made me see that you need a break, and you need time to just sit back and appreciate the things around you that are going to pass right by unless you sit up and take a look. And that's what I saw. Look at all I could be missing out on if I just keep my head

down ... I've got to put things into perspective ... now I have to make time because it makes me that much better of a person.

Transferring her realizations back home after the trip Karen identified the activities that were impinging on her newly valued personal time. Her employment, for example, she judged to be more of a stress inducer than a positive element in her life. "I quit my job due to the trip and it is one of the better decisions I have made. I now realize that my family and friends are important as well as self-time." Karen returned from the weekend experience not only more aware of her own needs, desires and values but empowered by an altered attitude.

Karen's journey, filled with personal revelations, feelings of empowerment and states of peacefulness, was also accompanied by sensations of frustration, disappointment and fatigue. As with most of the students on the trip, Karen found herself under arduous and trying circumstances paddling into the wind on Sunday afternoon. Karen's battle was raised on three fronts. The first, a physical contest with the elements, was a desperate attempt to keep the canoe streamlined into the wind and make progress through swells splashing over the gunwales. Secondly, this agonizing situation placed Karen and her partner in a state of dissonance and frustration, culminating when Karen's

partner, significantly physically stronger than she, gave up paddling in frustration. An interpersonal confrontation between the two ensued as they pitted their canoe skills and energy against the elements. Third, an intrapersonal struggle swept through Karen as she fought to motivate herself in addition to her weary partner. This challenging situation, packed full with negative emotions, proved to Karen to be a significant and memorable learning experience. "When things get hectic you can't throw up your hands and give up. Because you're not going to gain anything, you will just continue to lose. That really had an affect on me." Few of these positive emotions were evident to Karen during the paddle and demanded personal quiet time and intrapersonal reflection in order to emerge. After the wind, during solo time on Sunday afternoon Karen wrote,

Now I sit, surrounded by coloured leaves, blue sky, warm air and silence. I take back what I said [about the terrible experience in the wind]. Why would I expect sheer easy paddling? It was exciting, challenging ... unavoidable. I am safe now and very happy to be here ... I have just experienced something I'm not sure I'll ever experience again.

Transferring her weekend accomplishments to her everyday life, Karen felt better able to place life's challenges and responsibilities into perspective. "I found



I could tackle my assignments and my studying for exams with a better attitude. I don't know how the trip had that effect on me but all of a sudden my assignments weren't so large." By coping effectively with the challenges of the trip, and the horrendous head-wind in particular, Karen realized that "I underestimated myself when I said that I couldn't do it." Surprising herself with unrealized potential Karen recalled, "I am a lot stronger than I thought I was. Not externally but internally." Coping successfully with the head-wind coupled with the accomplishment of paddling a distance of 72 kilometres empowered Karen to feel extremely proud of herself. "[I felt] excellent, like I just did a huge accomplishment ... My highlight was just saying 'I did it'."

Karen was amazed that so many powerful emotions were brought to light on such a brief journey. With previous outdoor experience she felt confident she would enjoy herself but was surprised by the deeper, more meaningful sensations she encountered. "I didn't expect to experience so many different variations of the same feeling", Karen expressed.

I had the same feelings the whole weekend but they were at different levels and just when I thought that something was the best something else came along. So I didn't expect to have such an emotionally good time.

It's kind of weird ... I expected things to be the way they were but not so strong.

The meaning of Karen's journey was primarily derived through introspection, learning more about herself and clarifying personal values in an environment that she found conducive to unearthing such sentiments. However, while less eminent, relationships with other participants also contributed positively to Karen's experience.

#### Self and Others:

Karen was amazed at the rate and depth at which the group came together. She wrote in her journal, "For such a big group I am surprised we got so close ... I really feel close to this group and I have only known them for a few days." Karen found that the activities done on the trip helped to enhance the feeling of togetherness.

I really enjoyed the games and activities because we all acted ourselves and loosened up enough to make fools of ourselves. We played games that allowed us to get to know each other better, but most importantly, to feel more comfortable with our surroundings and our friends.

For example, during a rafting session, when the canoes drifted together in the current, she wrote, "I found these times to be precious bonding times", and after an activity

noted that, "this game made me remember what it was like to have fun and not feel childish for doing so."

While participating in activities helped the group to develop positive feelings towards one another the sharing of personal feelings enhanced the experience for Karen;

The sharing circle Friday brought us close ... it broke the ice. This trip we were forced to tell people how we feel and really it's so irregular to do that in your normal everyday life. I am just not an emotional person with strangers. I don't share my emotions even with close people ... but with this group the beginning was a little hard ... but by the end there wasn't really too much I was afraid to say. I could have said anything. I felt comfortable because everybody else was. We were all comfortable ... My feelings and thoughts were too strong to be suppressed.

For Karen, the structured activities formed an important element in group bonding and developed subsequent feelings of trust and togetherness.

After only a few collective hours with her group, Karen found that sharing common experiences with group members fostered an intimate atmosphere. For example, after watching a brilliant display of northern lights Karen expressed, "I felt that to be a gift ... they made me feel

closer to the group and gave me security." Karen was placed in a novel reality and drew comfort through facing the trip's challenges as a team. She felt secure in the group and wanted to be with the other members of the group for physical and emotional support. "Sunday I was very, very comfortable and felt very close to the group", she recalled, "because we'd all been through the same experience."

Karen found that she preferred to canoe towards the front of the pack. Unfortunately, she and her partner found themselves in the last canoe throughout much of the journey. "It was so frustrating, I just hated being at the back," she stated. Karen felt that her position in the group was a metaphor for life. "Being last is not where you want to be. I do not like being last in anything ... I felt excluded." While this feeling persisted in Karen for the duration of the trip, it became less important to her on Sunday. "By the end it was not as important where I fit with the rest of the group because I knew I fit with myself and that is what is important."

Cherishing times of solitude in the natural environment Karen felt frustrated by the constant reminders of the constructs of everyday life. She wished her weekend life-world to be a natural one, exploring, travelling and living in the wilderness. She resented the intrusions of the human

constructs, such as bridges and cars, that she was trying to escape. Karen emotionally recounted that

Everything could have been painted over the weekend, the trees ... the water ... even us in the canoes ... But the car [on the river-bank] didn't fit and then when I heard those gunshots ... I almost lost the emotional control ... They really didn't fit in the picture.

I can think of no finer way to capture the impact of the fifty hour journey on Karen other than through Karen herself, who summarized the trip remarking, "This has been one of the best experiences of my life."

Sam's Path

During my first meeting with Sam I was impressed by his maturity, honesty and sincerity. He was enthusiastic to be involved in the study but simultaneously questioned why I was so interested in his upcoming weekend experience. Interpersonal trust developed quickly between us, which in the meetings to come enhanced the depth of our communication and understanding towards one another. Sam expressed several personal and social concerns he had about the trip. He was looking forward to participating but was uncomfortable about many of the unknowns that awaited him.

Brought up just outside Drayton Valley, Alberta, Sam hopes to return to the rural life he enjoyed as a child. He spends much of his time competing in sports, especially swimming and basketball, as well as coaching swimming to children and teens. Sam's outdoor experience is limited to his family's annual summer bush camping holidays, a tradition he hopes to continue when he has a family of his own. He aspires to teach physical education outside the city, an environment which he believes to be the most appropriate for raising a family.

Table 6 presents a list of themes gained from Sam's wilderness weekend experience.

Table 6

Clusters of Sam's Themes

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Valuing Nature   | Appreciation of Natural Elements<br>Valuing the Natural Environmental                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Self Discovery   | Personal Calming--Solitude<br>Clashing of Realities<br>Perceived Threats to Personal Well Being<br>Empowerment through Self Confidence and<br>Accomplishment<br>Placing Life in Perspective<br>Change in Emotions<br>Attempting to Identify Powerful Inner<br>Emotions<br>Coping with the Challenge |
| Self with Others | Feeling Comfortable in and an Accepted<br>Member of the Group<br>Closeness to Others Through Shared<br>Common Experience<br>Cooperation<br>Disclosure of Selves                                                                                                                                     |



Interpretive synthesis of Sam's experience.

Sam entered our first post-trip meeting with a different manner than when we had met the preceding week. His previous apprehensions of the unknowns of the trip had metamorphosed into that of wonder and excitement, and, Sam was eager to share with me the surprises and transformations he had experienced over the weekend. When I first asked what he thought of the trip, he replied, "I thought it was great. I loved everything I did on it. It was a million times more than I had expected." Thus began our explorative voyage together, searching for the meanings of Sam's weekend experience.

Valuing Nature:

Sam's experience helped him to appreciate the outdoor environment as a place of solitude and tranquillity. "Nature is peace", he wrote during the trip and after it recalled, "I realized how much I truly respect nature's abilities, the beauty, the peacefulness and the purity. I feel in love with the outdoors." Quiet, natural places became more valuable to Sam as he began to comprehend their importance to him. He viewed wilderness worthy of preservation not only for its own sake, but as a therapeutic refuge for the rejuvenation of human spirit. Once he felt

comfortable and secure in the natural environment Sam stretched himself to reach out beyond his everyday scope, and risk discovering novel realities of his self.

#### Self-Discovery:

Sam embarked on this weekend trip full of conflicting emotions. He was enthusiastic to partake in the experience but was fearful of the many unknowns, such as the physical and social realities of living and travelling in an outdoor and perhaps hostile environment. "I'm a little bit nervous about going because you're not sure what to expect", Sam conceded before the trip. Will I be cold and wet? Am I bringing the right clothes? How will I measure up to the group? Will I be accepted? Burning questions such as these clouded Sam's anticipation of the trip. "When you're in a group with a lot of strangers in it you're not sure how they'll accept you." Looking back on his fears Sam acknowledged that "My biggest concern before the trip was feeling comfortable with the group and that started to disappear as soon as we were on the bus and on our way." Retrospectively Sam found that,

The emotion that sticks out the most is surprise. This trip is the total opposite of what I thought it would be. Rather than feeling nervous and anxious about the trip as a whole and my acceptance with the group, I

feel relaxed and have enjoyed the experience.... The trip exceeded my expectations by 1,000 times ... I left not looking forward to the weekend at all and came back having one of the greatest times of my life.

This abrupt alteration in attitude left Sam wallowing in personally profound and novel emotions. Unable to express himself adequately he wrote, "It's really hard to express all the emotions you feel ... It's such a different feeling that I've never experienced before. Such a nice feeling." These emotions, gained through self-discovery in the natural environment, were truly novel for Sam. As if tasting an ice-cream cone for the first time he cherished its flavour and wished it eternal life. Unable to express his feelings adequately and realizing that with time these profound positive emotions would melt, fade and perhaps disappear, he felt disheartened. Sam wrote,

I really seem to have trouble getting my feelings across, especially the powerful ones. I cannot match the feelings with words.... I sure feel frustrated that I cannot [write them] because I want the feelings to last and never be forgotten. It's good to feel pure and natural.

However, while unable to retain these emotions forever, Sam knew that he had tasted something extraordinary and was now more sensitised to recapture it at a later date.

Once Sam's anxieties toward the trip had evaporated his heavy baggage of stress began to disappear as well. Not until Sam had savoured another mode of living, a wilderness group experience, did he realize how full of stress his everyday life world had become. As if barely released from prison, the gates to his soul swung open and Sam danced in awe with his newly found freedom. He expressed immense gratitude in discovering the wilderness to be an effective medium to relax and de-stress. Sam wrote,

Getting away from the general societal pressures created the most relaxing environment I've experienced since university. It made me realize how much pressure and stress I was under and what an amazing feeling [it is] to have all that stress removed.

Temporarily purged of this enormous emotional weight Sam stated, "I'm feeling more relaxed now than I have in five months." Attempting to discover the reasons for his new freedom Sam recalled, "Being outdoors can be so soothing, it's hard to explain why, maybe because the pressures of society doesn't affect you on the river." With many of the everyday life stresses and anxieties gone or reduced, Sam was able to focus his energy towards reflecting upon himself and develop a more complete understanding of his life and thereby begin to reach out to others.

### Self with Others:

Sensing more clarity and vision in his life, Sam felt more confident about risking more interpersonal contact in the large group. "I feel a bit more secure, like now that I know more people you can venture out and meet new people.... Sometimes I have trouble meeting people, but there it was no problem, I felt comfortable with everybody." Feeling more comfortable in the social situation Sam's confidence in himself with others mounted. "I probably realized that I could contribute just as much as anyone else, I don't have to sit back ... like I can say what I want to say. I can contribute as much as anybody else can." Feelings such as these empowered Sam to develop greater and stronger interpersonal relations in his everyday life outside of the camping situation. "This has helped me so much. I feel much more comfortable approaching other people now", Sam triumphed. "Since the trip," he stated emphatically,

I have gone through lots of changes on how I look at things. I feel way more comfortable on how I look at school and especially meeting people. The amount of people I have met since the trip, outside of the trip, has gone up ten fold. I feel more comfortable meeting people.

As a result of exploring his own uncertainty through the group, Sam, as with Schutz (1989), began to realize that the

group had given him a gift. Unknowingly, Sam made use of the wilderness group environment to discover the certainty and weaknesses of his beliefs as well as how important it is for him to be accepted by the group.

Feeling an accepted key player in the group, Sam marvelled at the way in which the group pulled together to accomplish tasks.

I learnt that a group of people, once they put all their individual differences and opinions aside, can work together amazingly as a team.... Yeh, I felt good. It was amazing, there was total cooperation, there was no pressure in any way, everybody just worked so well together.

Sam felt that the games and activities were an important component of the trip and enhanced the cooperative atmosphere by encouraging people to be themselves while working together towards a common goal.

Everybody just felt really comfortable with everybody else.... you didn't have to try to be something you weren't, you could just be yourself.... The games were excellent, I was amazed by the way we worked as a team, almost all the inhibitors were gone.

Outdoor living, games and challenges all blended together to form important elements that helped Sam to relax and feel accepted as a member of the group.



I felt comfortable with everybody, but the feeling I got from them [games] was something I had never experienced before, just to see that type of cooperation. Everybody's idea was accepted and everybody felt comfortable putting in an idea, there was nobody who really sat back and never said anything.

The socially constructed wilderness experience was a novel one for Sam. Never before had he been in a social situation where self-consciousness seemed to drop off like leaves in an autumn breeze. The everyday superficial, competitive social norm had temporarily vanished. Socially conditioned to acting and relating in a semi-hostile everyday "me" world, Sam was surprised, pleased and even somewhat confused by it. "The trip was something totally different from what we are used to," he recalled. "Socially everyone acted differently towards one another. Comfort level between people was accelerated. We were strangers and then overnight we were best friends."

Sam felt that the sharing circles promoted a feeling of trust which helped bring participants closer together.

You just started to feel more comfortable once you trusted everybody, especially in the sharing circles. I think that was a big thing. The first night I felt uncomfortable because you don't really know anybody,



you don't want to say anything that will embarrass you. And by the end you trusted everybody, you knew if you said something that everybody was going to take it and not laugh at you.

The interpersonal trust and respect that developed, for Sam, seemed to accelerate the rate at which the group came together. "It was just like talking to somebody sitting beside you that has been your best friend for 20 years.... In the sharing circle everybody is sitting there really listening and you know they really care about what you are saying."

Six months after the trip Sam disclosed to me that after the trip he is better able to view life "through the bigger picture." His dreams, aspirations, values, relationships and anxieties can now be viewed with more clarity and from a longer term outlook. The "experience changed my perspective on a lot of things", he stated. "For example, how we get wrapped up in school and work. We must look at it from the big picture. What is really important to us. Enjoy your self, happiness, health, family."

Before an eaglet can learn to fly it requires enough self-confidence to take its initial step away from the nest. It must take the risk of launching itself into thin air to

see if it can indeed take wing. After a few initial rough test flights the young bird soon learns how to catch and ride the thermals and eventually soar. Encouraged by its parents, I can only imagine how an eaglet feels as it spreads its small wings and takes its first big step. During our shared times together, Sam taught me what it feels like to venture forth on a wilderness journey with a large group, initially feeling as if you only have stubs for wings. Soon into the weekend trip, for reasons explained above, Sam felt secure enough to test his wings. He was not only amazed that he did not plummet, but was surprised by the newly discovered euphoric emotions associated with high altitude soaring.

I thought it was great. I loved everything I did in it. It is a million times more than I had expected.... Like it was a big experience for me, it was probably one of the best experiences that I have had in my whole life.

Nancy's Path

A native Albertan, Nancy is in her first year of physical education. Physically active, Nancy especially enjoys squash, basketball and skiing as well as adventurous outdoor experiences such as rock climbing and white water rafting. As a child her father took her out on frequent hikes as well as many domestic family camping trips. During her quieter moments Nancy savours relaxing with a good book. Upon graduating from physical education Nancy aspires to a Masters degree.

During our first meeting together I was struck by Nancy's confidence in herself and the depth at which she articulated her emotions and beliefs. She looked forward to the upcoming weekend trip and seemed delighted to guide me through her experience. In the post-trip meetings she shared with me her insatiable quest to look beyond her immediate feelings and explore her inner self, thus brightening our understanding of her experience.

Table 7

Clusters of Nancy's Themes

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Valuing Nature   | Connectedness to Natural Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Self-Discovery   | Elusiveness of Escape from Daily Life<br>Personal Calming--Solitude<br>Identifying Feelings and Aspects of Self<br>Perceived Threats to Personal Well Being<br>Empowerment through Accomplishment<br>Trip's End (Inner Tension)<br>Change in Emotions<br>Coping with the Challenge<br>Tension Over Lost Study Time |
| Self with Others | Cooperation<br>Interpersonal Understanding, Openness<br>and Acceptance<br>Social Bonding<br>Uncovering Real Others<br>Disclosure of Selves<br>Leadership<br>Closeness to Others Through Shared<br>Common Experience                                                                                                |

Interpretive synthesis of Nancy's experience.

After countless readings of Nancy's journal I marvel at her ability to document her feelings with such clarity and write in a most reflective and insightful manner. The more time Nancy and I spent together the more I appreciated her proficiency to vividly illuminate her emotions and perceptions. However, Nancy was seldom satisfied with simply communicating her feelings and often took the process one step further by attempting to make interpretive sense of her lived experience. Due to her rather enviable skill of articulating her thoughts and emotions with such incredible translucence as well as her introspective drive, I feel fortunate to have had such a competent guide. Setting sail on an exploratory voyage for meaning, Nancy skillfully piloted a course with me through her wilderness weekend domain, her personal and unique lived experience.

Valuing Nature:

During the trip Nancy's first real appreciation of the natural environment occurred Friday evening during the dancing curtain of northern lights. After this humbling experience Nancy quoted the following passage in her journal, "Serendipity--the faculty of making fortunate discoveries by accident." This gift of lights spoke to

Nancy, beckoning her to embark on a journey of self-discovery and meaning. The following morning nature communicated to her once again, this time in the form of a beaver. Nancy explained;

A beaver went right by our canoe and Cheryl found that the most amazing thing. I think it almost seemed like the beaver was kind of saying we were a part of nature and cooperating with it and you felt more of a part of the environment around you, just by having a little beaver swim in front of your canoe. He wasn't scared of going right by us; we weren't foreigners and invading.... He was a messenger of nature--open, honest and accepting.

The wilderness had spoken, Nancy had heard and understood its message. She elaborated;

The simplicity of nature and honesty of nature--no competition, no hidden agendas. That makes people more caring and expressive. Nature is not deceitful like our society. Nature is just what it is--honest--simple. Therefore people [living in wilderness] just take that on. Subconsciously you take on the environment, you live the environment. In society we try to make things so complicated, more difficult than they need to be. You live the environment, you become a part of it, you are a part of it.

To Nancy the natural world exemplified living clarity of

genuine being. It was not hostile nor a resource to be abused, but a simple, trusting and honest friend. For Nancy, nature was a teacher and a role model, but only for those who took the time to listen and grasp its meaning. Heeding nature's call through the inspiration of her surroundings, Nancy discovered herself transcending the limits of her intra-subjective sensibilities, reflecting upon and learning about herself.

#### Self-Discovery:

Living the rhythmic flow of wilderness became a valued aspect of Nancy's weekend and awakened her senses to a more meaningful being.

I really noticed that I was listening to things and seeing things that I probably wouldn't have....

Creativity was more apparent. Thoughtful creativity ... I would notice things more, trees' appearance, colour of the sky. Normally I would never have noticed them.

This growing perceptiveness sensitized Nancy to hear, see, smell, touch and taste the natural world better and consequently feel interrelated to it. These feelings of connectedness to wilderness aroused Nancy to appreciate nature more and learn and grow from it.



Listening to, living in and co-existing with nature Nancy discovered that, "Everything happens at its own pace ... not controlled by our schedule and the clock." Clock or linear time, as we know it in our world, is nothing more than a human construct, a technology that should not automatically be blindly or faithfully accepted (Kohak, 1984). We allow time to impose orderliness into our lives, creating fixed schedules, which invariably promote stress into our artificial life-world. This structuring of everyday life distances us from the rhythms of our natural, primordial life-world. Natural or real time flows with the pulse of the natural, real world. Nancy found that recognizing and understanding this phenomenon helped her to feel peaceful and wholesome.

Nancy discovered that living the seemingly timelessness of the weekend journey was, "living a different pace." In this new milieu she found that, "it is easier to be introspective and to reflect on important things in your life. Time is different, challenges are different. But it is much more than that. It is so hard to verbalize. To get a handle on it." But Nancy felt that while perhaps difficult, it is an excellent opportunity, as well as terribly important to recognize and understand one's emotions. "A big part of knowing yourself and communicating is being able to recognize how you feel and explain those

feelings." During the journey Nancy found that "it was [now] easier to look at my feelings and to communicate those with other people." The experience, for some reason seemed to facilitate introspection, communication and understanding of self and others. Perhaps, Nancy reflected, it is,

Because of this weekend and the times where we had to share about our feelings, thoughts and emotions, I think I learned to more easily identify with how I am feeling and how I'm able to express that well to others and in words in my log book. I think that in communicating on a deeper level of thoughts and feelings and not simply recording events affects our abilities to think clearly and be understood effectively.

Nancy said that she felt, "more creative, more alive", and found the natural environment helped to foster different feelings and realities than home; deeper and more introspective thoughts. "It became easier to identify feelings" she stated emphatically. In everyday life "we do not take the time to think about feelings and express those feelings."

Nancy has the gifted ability to recognize meaning and significance in many of her experiences. For example, the seemingly insignificant exercise of crossing the river Friday afternoon proved to be an important and empowering

accomplishment for Nancy and her paddling partner. At the time Nancy felt that,

We didn't know what we were doing. But then we got over quite quickly; way faster than I thought and we were doing pretty good and I think that was quite a big accomplishment and I felt quite satisfied about that. So it was just a little thing but I think it made a big impact.... This crossing was something tangible to build on. Little successes along the way summate to being confident of one's abilities. Rock climbing, for example, is a metaphor for life. You can't go back, you must go higher. Each step up builds confidence, you pull yourself up. You cannot be afraid of facing these challenges. The canoeing was the same. On an outdoor trip these successes transfer to success in life.... Don't be afraid to face something new and make mistakes.

Don't be afraid to risk and fail. For it is most often through initial failures that we attain great success. Is not the backbone of education to encourage students to discover their potential through risk; learning through their failures and growing through their successes? Risking not only in a physical sense but in social and emotional domains as well. The following poem, "A Time to Risk", echoes Nancy's beliefs:

### To Laugh is to Risk

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool,  
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental,  
To reach out for another is to risk involvement.  
To expose our feelings is to risk exposing our true  
    self,  
To place your ideas, your dreams before the crowd is to  
    risk loss,  
To love is to risk not being loved in return,  
To live is to risk dying,  
To hope is to risk despair,  
To try at all is to risk failure,  
But risk we must, because the greatest hazard in life  
    is to risk nothing.  
The man, the woman who risks nothing - does nothing,  
                                    has nothing,  
                                    is nothing.  
They may avoid suffering ... but they simply cannot  
    learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.  
Chained by their attitudes, they are slaves; they have  
    forfeited their freedom.  
Only the person who risks can be called a free person.

(Anonymous, 1990, p.21)

For Nancy, the initial canoeing experience of crossing the river set an excellent tone for the trip and fostered a receptive attitude for further challenges met on the journey. During the wind on Sunday for example, Nancy, for the most part, enjoyed the struggle and "felt satisfied and pleased when we made it through the rough section of the river.... I learned that I like things when they are somewhat challenging." Nancy insightfully and metaphorically added that,

You can compare that to facing and overcoming problems that we face in life. For instance taking them one stroke at a time or one bend in the river at a time as a metaphor for life, but realizing in the end that we did overcome something and that we were stronger than we thought we were.

Feeling empowered Nancy quoted Vito Sackville - West, "I worshipped dead men for their strength, forgetting I was strong." Then upon further reflection of the significance of her experience added, "To succeed we must be willing to sacrifice who we are for who we might become."

Digging deeply within herself to discover and comprehend more of her personal self was a significant part of the wilderness experience for Nancy. Additionally, much of the meaning of Nancy's trip was gained through interpersonal relations, cooperating, working and at times

struggling with her peers. While Nancy considered her travelling companions to have contributed positively to her experience, she perceived outsiders who were encountered during the trip, as well as human objects of everyday life, to have had a distinctly negative influence on her weekend experience.

#### Self with Others:

Nancy, wanting to be wrapped in inner peace, considered any flagrant distraction by outsiders from her natural experience a personal invasion. Nancy wrote,

Everything is so serene until ... we paddled past a guy blasting rock music [from shore]. It was offensive, like noise pollution.... The noise of the trucks on the bridge the first night, the motor boat, the bridges we saw ... they all took away from the experience. When I saw them I wanted to transport myself back up the river. I did not want to be in both states at the same time; it was confusing and distressing.

All of the aforementioned interruptions represent physical intrusions that disturbed the flow of the natural life experience for Nancy. Throughout the trip Nancy did not want to be reminded of the society she wished to escape and subsequently any violations of naturalness decreased her perceptions of freedom and solitude. As well as the natural

ambience, personal space became more valued and protected by Nancy during her wilderness journey. Richley (1992) seems to capture Nancy's emotions well;

Personal space seems to be important in wilderness solitude. Perhaps it is relative; the more we have, the more we expect. One often feels very protective of a place that one has chosen for a period of solitude. Even visual sightings of other people ... can disturb the flow.

Whether in solitude or in a group experience, it made little difference to Nancy; she was trying to experience life in the natural world and was irritated by the overt invasions of society upon her experience.

While people and human constructs outside the group detracted from the experience, classmates and leaders within the group enriched Nancy's journey in many ways. Through social interaction Nancy found herself inadvertently shaping the experience of others while others' actions and presence simultaneously forged Nancy's experience. This interpersonal (within group) affective domain was a fundamental aspect of the weekend experience for Nancy. She was both amazed and fascinated by the personal warmth and depth as well as the freedom of social expression and respect demonstrated and encouraged by members of the group. For example, Nancy related,



I was impressed by the cooperative games. There was absolutely no hesitancy in crawling around over everybody's bodies and stuff and that was kind of cool and most other settings or atmospheres that you couldn't have that achieved. And so quickly too. Really in 24 hours people were doing that.

With this increased level of interpersonal trust Nancy felt that others were more willing to be themselves and risk. "Everybody kind of got used to the idea and they were more sensitive to their feelings and it was easier to express them and they also knew that people would respect those feelings." This openness and wilful sharing of thoughts, feelings and ideas were both surprising and heart-warming for Nancy. She had never conceived that such a large group of people, who barely knew one another, could and would be so honest, open, caring and respectful towards one another. Nancy elaborated,

People were honest with their feelings, anxieties and expressions to themselves and to the rest of the group and by doing that they became very vulnerable to being laughed at or put down, that when they were respected by other members of the group and empathized with, that they became even more willing to share even more honestly. As well, games where the sharing and pooling of resources and ideas was imperative helped to further foster that drawing together. I don't know why this

occurred in our situation when it doesn't seem to in others. But I found it interesting that no one really put down anyone else when they didn't catch on to a campfire game or when they shared their feelings. I think perhaps that when you are really honest and genuine regarding personal feelings and self doubts that people can relate to that and feel safer in expressing how they feel as well.... The openness created a cyclic atmosphere where openness encouraged more openness.

Sharing and giving brought more in return. Childhood values that students had forgotten during their rush though life seemed to emerge. The magic of thoughtfulness seemed to cast its spell and foster an interpersonal ambience distant to that of many. In the wilderness life-world Nancy marvelled at the way in which,

The group was very open to ideas and new ways of doing things from our group members and we considered the needs of a group as a whole and not just our independent needs.... Society, promotes self centredness whereas the outdoors promotes group centredness.... Here [at home], it is just a me, me, me reality. Out there [wilderness], it is a we, we, we reality.... For example there is no way one person would succeed canoeing alone in the wind; we needed one another.

Our materialistic, progressive society desensitizes people to values and experiences which could otherwise enrich the quality of their lives. Here, it often becomes the norm to ignore or forget values that are conducive to living a meaningful existence and instead focus on what we perceive to be "progress". Unfortunately this "progress" is more often an impudent construction of an artificial reality of leisure and affluence in isolation from, as well as destructive to, our natural world. For example, in modern society, it is widely accepted that happiness is derived through our insatiable race for convenience, comfort, prestige and power; our governments exalt this belief through their decree of our need to continually increase our standard of living. In fact, in the office of a department chair of a local university hangs a poster of a home and its five-car garage. In the driveway of the home sit five expensive automobiles; a caption below reads, "The rewards of higher education." These values demonstrate the need to collect possessions in order to exhibit one's artificial presentation of self. Somewhere during this fanatical pursuit we have forgotten the simpler aspects of life, ones that were so vital to us in our younger years. This value structure is well captured in the following credo:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and  
draw and paint and sing and dance and play and  
work everyday some.

Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic,  
hold hands, and stick together.

Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the  
styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant  
goes up and nobody really knows why, but we are  
all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the  
little seed in the cup - they all die. So do we.  
And remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word  
you learned - the biggest word of all - LOOK.

(Fulghum, 1988, p. 4 - 5)

The wilderness seems to promote many of these fundamental values that we seem to have forgotten; Christian values that help to foster meaning in and purpose to one's life. I believe that Fulghum's credo seizes upon what Nancy suggests transpired during the group's weekend wilderness experience.

The group's promotion of group centredness also seemed to help facilitate the emergence of real others. For example, one of the most meaningful elements of the entire trip for Nancy was, as she reported, "On Sunday realizing how much you can learn about other people on a short canoeing trip. Some people are quite unhappy about the wind while others are quite enthusiastic. It is interesting to see how different people respond to different things." It was extremely significant for Nancy to discover who the participants on the trip really were. She explained,

Sharing feelings always seemed to rid people of the masks they wear.... [they helped me to] get to know people on a deeper level, not superficial.... they forced you to think about how you felt, and what you were seeing, what you were doing and just compare how you felt compared to other people and you all felt the same way.... When people realize that everybody else is kind of in the same boat I think that you tend to sympathize with them more and ... we feel closer as a group.

It was reassuring to Nancy to learn that most of the people on the trip shared her concerns and highlights of the journey. During the sharing circles, the disclosure of selves helped Nancy to appreciate each individual for who they really were. Nancy explained "[I] realized that almost everyone has something interesting to be learned about them, that people are different/unique and that each person has different strengths." Furthermore, Nancy discovered that respect and tolerance for one another was more apparent during the trip than in daily life. Nancy illustrated,

People have a tendency to put down others who are not like themselves in order to validate themselves. If you are forced into a situation with people who are not like yourself that you have not chosen then you will learn to appreciate their strengths, where perhaps before you would not have opened yourself up to doing so.

By the trip's end Nancy found herself greatly sensitized to many powerful inner emotions and struggled to determine their source. She found that, "Sharing basic things on trip was a fundamental reason for good feelings derived from trip." For example: eating together, squished into the tent together, basic living with each other and the free expression of personal feelings. For Nancy, the sharing of selves, cooperation and respect, seemingly less

valued in our everyday rush for a "better" life, formed the fundamental base of her personal growth and group team-building on the trip. In summarizing her experience Nancy wrote, "This trip will be one of my highlights of my university years and I'll look back on it with fond memories."



Ron's Path

A self described "city boy", Ron was born and raised in Edmonton. He enjoys most urban competitive team sports such as basketball, hockey, baseball and football. Ron is an avid participant in all of these and enjoys watching these activities as well.

Enrolled in his first year of physical education, Ron was slowly becoming accustomed to university life. During our first meeting he was curious as to why I was interested in his upcoming weekend experience, especially since his previous outdoor experience was confined to that of a public campground. Never the less he was eager to help me in my research and volunteered honest and insightful information. Before the trip he admitted that, "I would rather not go [on the trip] because of school." As well as losing study time he was concerned about the unknown physical and social aspects of his first canoe trip and expressed having little enthusiasm for it. However, despite his reservations, Ron embarked on the journey with an open mind, prepared for the worst and hoping for the best.

Table 8

Clusters of Ron's Themes

|                  |                                          |
|------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Valuing Nature   | Appreciation of Natural Environment      |
| Self-Discovery   | Personal Calming--Solitude               |
|                  | Intrapersonal Awareness [Learning]       |
|                  | Perceived Threats to Personal Well Being |
|                  | Coping with the Challenge                |
|                  | Change in Emotions and Perceptions       |
| Self with Others | Cooperation                              |
|                  | Empowerment through Awareness of         |
|                  | Equality                                 |
|                  | Uncovering Real Others                   |
|                  | Social Bonding--Cohesion                 |
|                  | Feeling more Comfortable as a Group      |
|                  | Member                                   |
|                  | Disclosure of Selves                     |

Interpretive synthesis of Ron's experience.

Valuing Nature:

Ron's most vivid recollection and meaningful appreciation of the canoe trip was the northern lights. The majestic, humbling display of lights jostled Ron to see and appreciate a stunning reality of nature. The power of the enthralling aurora borealis also helped him to later take notice of nature's more subtle gifts, such as flowers and trees, a reality of life that in the past he had virtually ignored. Ron described his reaction;

In town you might see them [northern lights] but you don't really stop to look at them, same with the scenery, the trees and what not. You don't really stop to look, but now for sure if I see the northern lights I'm going to stop and look at them ... they were just beautiful. In the city we do not take time to appreciate or even notice nature, now I will take the time.

After his weekend experience Ron explained "I have a better understanding of the outdoors and how easy it is to go through life and miss out on a lot of wonderful things." The natural world reached out to Ron and kindled an interest and sense of value that he had never before detected. The wilderness acted as a metaphorical symbol to Ron, urging him

to wake up and taste life. To see if he could not learn what life had to teach, and not, when it came time to die, discover that he had not lived (Thoreau, 1990). However, while this feeling was real and robust for Ron during and shortly after the trip it became but a distant memory six months after the journey. At this time, during our fourth meeting, Ron acknowledged that "time has eroded some of my feelings.... I care more about the environment but not as much as I thought I would right after the trip." Although with time Ron's concern for and wonder of nature regressed to near baseline levels, Ron thought that the weekend experience had sensitized his emotions toward nature; liberating him to be more appreciative of the natural world during future outdoor excursions.

#### Self-Discovery:

Ron embarked on the trip feeling anxious about it and was partaking "only because I have to." The unknowns, typical of many novice trippers, seemed to be exemplified for Ron; a plethora of anxieties clouded his enthusiasm. He was worried about his equipment, distressed he may forget something and extremely concerned as to how he would fit in to the outdoor group's social structure. As well, he was troubled about being a burden to the group and afraid of being last. Even the possibility of catching a cold,

coughing in the tent all night and consequently annoying people, bothered him. But most significant to Ron were the haunting unknowns. Before canoeing, for instance, he wrote in his journal, "I'm nervous about the canoe ride. I don't know what to expect." Unaccustomed to outdoor living, Ron's imagination presented many threats to his personal well being and clearly tainted his enthusiasm for the trip.

As the weekend journey began to unfold Ron soon realized that many of his previous concerns were unfounded. For example, Friday afternoon after the initial canoeing session across the river to the campsite he recalled, "I arrived at far bank and found out I was nervous [before the crossing] for no reason." Each step he took through his experience gave him encouragement and confidence; by Saturday afternoon his anxieties seemed to wash away with the current of the river. "You didn't worry about them [concerns] at all. As the trip went on it got funner", he stated. Ron found that he could "relax and be yourself and if you screw up you don't feel as bad [as you would at home]." The atmosphere, the living conditions and, most importantly, the social situation were much different than he had anticipated. "Before I went on the trip I thought I would finish with the feeling, 'good, it is er'. But the feeling I finished with was far different, far better, than I had originally perceived" he told me with surprise. By

Sunday afternoon his attitude had shifted radically from that of fifty hours prior. In revelation Ron observed, "In a funny way, I'm sort of sad to see the weekend end. It was fun but most of all a really different experience for me."

By living in the natural world Ron was eventually able to relax and learn more about himself. He began to sense an appreciation for getting out into wilderness, away from his daily routine. Relaxing, mentally and physically, were important aspects of the trip for Ron, who stated, "They [outdoor trips] are one of the greatest things for relaxing.... to really reflect ... there is nothing distracting you.... Outdoor trips are important because they get you to forget your problems." During this brief period he was able to attain a better perspective of his life, to sort through his values and better comprehend how he relates to and with others. The weekend provided Ron with the opportunity to get "to know people and [see] how you act around new people." With more self confidence toward the end of the trip he reported, "Don't let your friends reflect your personality, let your personality reflect yourself." Comments such as these seemed far from the apprehensive Ron whom I had met with prior to the trip.

### Self with Others:

Prior to the trip Ron told me that as a part of his lab group, "I sort of feel I am not quite in place yet." He was uncomfortable with the social situation and hadn't had the opportunity to become familiar with many people. However, soon into the trip Ron found himself thrown into an intense interpersonal milieu. Through the trip's activities a new social reality was transformed into that of intense human collaboration; one that actively promoted and encouraged interpersonal interaction. No longer could Ron stand aside; the new outdoor social reality did not support alienation. A new standard was set and encouraged: togetherness, openness, trust and respect. Ron declared, "Here you got to know everyone like people who were shy and what not because you all spoke out ... you couldn't hide, you had to speak out." Ron, reserved himself, found it more difficult to remain anonymous than in everyday life social situations. At first it was difficult, perhaps even uncomfortable. But as the group began to weld and his anxieties dissipated, feelings for himself soared and he began to enjoy his new found freedom within the novel social structure. Ron recounted,

the Friday night games got everyone relaxed and you felt like yourself after. That set the tone for the week-end. [Initially], you're going out there not as a



group but as you and maybe your tent group. But I came back and felt like the group. I felt important.

Ron found that the sharing of personal information in the sharing circle encouraged others in the group to share. The more individuals shared the greater others felt the need to share. This atmosphere of reciprocal sharing and respect for one another's feelings encouraged people to unite around a common cause. Ron found that the first sharing circle was an uncomfortable experience but one that improved during the course of the weekend. Ron explained, "The first one [sharing circle] was 'I don't want to do this', 'I do not want to speak in front of everyone', but then the last day it didn't bother me at all; like I wanted to tell everybody what I really liked about the trip." The physical organization of sitting in a circle where group members are visible to all helped Ron to feel more comfortable and therefore more willing to share of himself. He expressed, "In the circles everyone seemed to listen. In the circle everyone is facing each other so everyone was paying attention. It got the group really close."

Additionally, the sharing circles helped Ron deal more effectively with his anxieties, especially when he discovered that the great majority of campers shared similar concerns. Ron illustrated,

When we went over the expectations and what people were worried about, you notice that everyone basically got the same one, it's not just you worried about this. There are other people worried that this could happen. You weren't alone out there.

Realizations such as these helped to dispel Ron's feelings of insecurity and promoted group unity around a common goal. Similarly, the sharing of personal highlights near the end of the trip helped Ron to reflect over portions of the experience that he had not yet considered. He shared,

When we went through what we liked about it people would say something and you would think 'yeh, I forgot about that' and just get you to reflect on everything. The whole trip went through your head when everybody was talking about the best times.... I left there [the closing circle] saying 'that was neat', like everyone basically felt the same way I did.

While the sharing circles provided Ron with a formal avenue of discourse, other elements in the experience fostered similar opportunities for him to share of himself. On the canoe trip, sharing, a socially promoted and self-perpetuating free-flowing interpersonal transfer of emotions and personal effects, created an exciting and new reality for Ron. He recounted,

I think the rafting up was really good because you did

a lot of sharing. With food, etcetera, if you were in the city and saw someone bring out a package of chips, and you didn't know them too well, your not going to ask them for some, right? But when you rafted up, even if you didn't know them too well, you would ask. The rafting up really helped that.

Ron found that the trip enabled him to get to know people better than he had thought possible. He recounted, "Most of the time you see them [peers] in the same situation, i.e., surrounded by their friends, and have a different perspective [of them]." During this trip, outside a highly socially structured and "other" determined context, Ron explained,

[The trip] makes you get to know the person better, not necessarily closer but you got to see what they are really like outside of school and outside of their homes and their own group of friends. A lot of times the only time you see someone is with their friends and ... she'll act different because she's around her friends. But this way you're all split up, you all come from different places and your real self comes out.

Co-existing with others on a daily basis helped Ron to discover equality among individuals. The realization of

this egalitarian social state had an enormous impact on Ron's level of interpersonal self-confidence. It appeared that Ron previously equated objective success and achievement to that of self worthiness and value. The weekend journey helped Ron to deduce otherwise. He stated emphatically,

In class you just see people ... they could be the smartest person in the world, but when you get them out camping they are just normal like you. Like some people you can't have conversations with cuz they are too smart.... 'Oh, he is a brain, like don't go near him'. But out in the woods you don't think about that at all. It doesn't matter what the person does in school, it's his personality that comes out.... Everybody's basically the same, no one is extraordinary.

This personally novel and empowering perception of Ron's, revealing that he was equal and worthy among peers, liberated him to associate more comfortably and confidently with others. He felt less threatened and was more willing to risk, give and share of himself. Six months after the trip Ron enthusiastically explained the trip's greatest personal impact.

The largest long term way in which the trip affected me ... was that I am now less inhibited to be social to others. This is because I now know that we are all

equal. The guy who pulls off a 9 is no better than myself. Realizing equality makes me feel more comfortable around people. I am more confident meeting and dealing with people. It is easier to get to know others.

Encouraged to feel proud of his individual biography, his core-self, Ron felt less tension objectifying his reality with others. He no longer felt obligated to play the role of another and learned to see through other's roles and into their core-selves as well.

For Ron, however, the passage of time had eroded many of his positive emotions attained during the wilderness journey. Half a year after the trip he expressed that, "time has dissipated my high attitude." He found that upon his return from the trip he felt incredibly enthusiastic about a number of the aforementioned elements. But he openly acknowledged that as far as being environmentally concerned, "It is hard to change your lifestyle. We bow to the pressures of society. Same as exercising or dieting. We start off full guns and then the enthusiasm fades." Never the less, the experience had been a meaningful one to Ron, but without reinforcement from other sources, time had worn away the significance of the trip for him, especially his concern for and appreciation of the natural world. Ron stated, "Lots of things I got out of the trip have

normalized." However, Ron did continue to feel that the experience had helped him significantly to feel a great deal more confident in interpersonal relations.

### Doug's Path

When I first met Doug he beamed with a glow for life; his enthusiasm for the trip was infectious. He reminded me of a race horse, impatiently awaiting for the starting gate to open. Doug just wanted to go; he wanted to be active with others. A tremendously social individual, Doug was eager for the trip to begin so that he could participate with his peers in a dynamic environment. Comfortable with wilderness living, Doug was anxious to help his classmates in this challenging environment and become a key player in their group endeavour.

Doug enjoys most sports, especially badminton, competitive swimming, hockey and fast-ball. He also plays several musical instruments and played in his high school band. A life-guard for many years, he aspires to be a high-school physical education teacher. A intensely social character, he relishes company and loves group events. Doug enjoys being outside and has continued his family's tradition of weekend domestic camping with his friends. He has taken numerous outdoor courses and has taken part in several high-school canoe trips. Doug appreciates outdoor experiences primarily for the opportunities of social collaboration.



Table 9

Clusters of Doug's Themes

|                  |                                     |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Valuing Nature   | Appreciation of Natural Environment |
| Self-Discovery   | Feeling Peaceful                    |
|                  | Intrapersonal Awareness             |
|                  | Coping with the Challenge           |
|                  | Tension over Lost Study Time        |
| Self with Others | Uncovering Real Others              |
|                  | Cooperation                         |
|                  | Belonging                           |
|                  | Social Bonding--Cohesion            |
|                  | Caring                              |
|                  | Disclosure of Selves                |
|                  | Conflict                            |
|                  | Change                              |

Interpretive synthesis of Doug's experience.

Doug returned from the trip with his usual enthusiasm and radiating warmth. During our first post-trip meeting Doug felt satiated with his quest during the trip for enjoyment, adventure and socialization. Through my ensuing meetings with Doug and reading various documents of his experience, I began to grasp the meaning of his outdoor educational journey beyond the walls of the university.

Valuing Nature:

The spectacular northern lights, the peacefulness and the beauty of the natural world contrasted sharply to Doug's modern, technical and busy everyday life. The relatively pristine and untouched region through which Doug canoed helped him to become more perceptive towards environmental influences. "I saw more realization in nature" Doug expressed.

I learned to look at things using different senses: eyes, ears, smell; you learn to use that stuff more when you're out in the woods than when you're out in the university campus, and that's stuff you learn to appreciate.

While Doug became more sensitized to his surroundings, the

environment subconsciously encouraged him to become more open and thoughtful unto himself.

#### Self Discovery:

A self proclaimed high energy individual, Doug found himself momentarily slowing down to meet the rhythms of the natural world. Distanced from the distractions of his busy urban life, Doug became more sensitive to his own needs and those of others. "I realized a lot about myself that I did not know," Doug stated. "It really made me think about things I take for granted." The journey encouraged him to step into a new corporeality, an environment fostering introspection.

Through the environmental and social challenges that he encountered during the trip, Doug recognized a number of vital elements which he perceived to be essential qualities for a safe, enjoyable and successful journey. These qualities are not only important ingredients for successful outdoor journeys, but, according to Doug, throughout life as well. Doug began,

[It is] important to me to have a positive attitude. Essential in any situation. For learning to occur one must keep an open mind and positive attitude to achieve best and maximum results.... [It is] important to have

confidence in yourself to make you realize all your accomplishments and how much you learned. A self realization that you can do it.... I learnt that I could cope with others no matter what their actions were.... that I show more sympathy towards people than I thought I did.... and to always treat others as you would like to be treated in return.... I learnt that I expect a lot from myself in terms of leadership and performance.... that I can make do in any situation.... [and] if you make an effort you can do anything you want.

Doug felt that the challenges he met during the trip facilitated his belief in and generation of his aforementioned thoughts and beliefs.

An important factor for Doug in setting the tone for the weekend was his success in meeting the first challenge of the journey. Doug recounted, "[The] first challenge of getting across river was a general start to feeling good, group togetherness and developing a sense of accomplishment." For Doug, this early achievement nurtured a feeling of confidence that helped him to master other personal successes over the weekend.

Self with Others:

Feeling confident and actively seeking adventure, Doug found overcoming successive challenges during the weekend to be extremely significant. "Challenge is a main reason why we went on this trip", he declared, "A trip with no challenge doesn't add excitement." As challenges were presented throughout the journey Doug eagerly rose to meet them. However, the wind on Sunday proved to be a particularly significant and arduous one for him. Writing in his journal soon after the event Doug recounted, "I felt very discouraged and tired. My attitude is starting to change to a negative one ... the group is very negative even though we are still close. Everyone is tired, cold, wet and cranky." Personally and interpersonally, Doug believed that the wind was by far the most difficult incident of the weekend. He felt that it was a real test of his personal determination as well as the group's commitment and solidarity.

Struggling through the wind, conflicts arose between group members. Doug recalled,

The lab group as a whole was starting to get on each other's nerves.... a lot of negative attitudes started to come ... like 'why did we come here? This isn't a good thing to do. We got a lot of work to do.'

Everybody bitching at each other.... cursing and swearing.... Even me, when I canoed, I found myself snapping at my partner and bossing him around.

Faced with an event seldom confronted in his everyday life, Doug's energetic enthusiasm seriously wavered with that of the group's; however, several days after the frustrating event Doug's viewpoint had altered. He remarked,

I think the wind was a good thing, I really do.... At the beginning on Saturday everyone was positive. You could feel the energy and enthusiasm. [On Sunday] the wind was long and tiring and you could see that attitude start to change. But you needed a challenge to bring this out. The wind helped people--gave them more confidence in themselves and let them prove themselves. Wind was like an achievement. It proved we could do it. Without the wind there would have been less conflict and less learning.... After it was over we felt more fulfilled and satisfied with ourselves.

Once passed, Doug was able to reflect back upon the trip and value its significance. "I will never forget the games and the wind", he claimed, "they really made an impact on me." However, during the exercise of paddling into the wind Doug felt little positive emotion.

Developing a greater awareness towards the environment and of his own needs, as well as struggling through the wind

were certainly significant elements for Doug. But these emotions were less meaningful to him compared to the social aspect. Doug loves being with, participating with and sharing with people. By far the greatest meaning of his experience was derived through being socially accepted by and interacting with his peer group. The wilderness canoe journey provided a setting for Doug to foster his craving for joyful interpersonal relations.

Friday night was an especially significant time for Doug. He found that before the evening programme people tended to keep to themselves. "Before the games a lot of people were afraid to say anything." After the games, during the first sharing circle, "People really loosened up ... when we had to tell our fears and what not." After this session Doug declared, "Everybody knew what everybody else expected and what they were afraid of and what they weren't afraid of. That tended to be really important." The short paddle across the river Friday afternoon coupled with the evening programme of games and sharing circles set an important precedent for the weekend experience for Doug. These activities were examples of Doug's personal success as well as that of the group's. These intra- and interpersonal accomplishments encouraged Doug to risk and be successful throughout the wilderness journey.



Doug was amazed at the rate in which the group came together over the course of the weekend. He remarked, "The quickness of all this [relationships] was a surprise for me ... We all seemed like a close family. You felt you belonged, everybody belonged, kind of a family group, and I think that was important." Unable to pinpoint the reason for this rapid bonding, Doug declared, "Everything contributed in a way ... Probably more the group circles or debriefings, that's where the feelings came out, people learned about each other, and probably the games that we played." As well, the times of group sharing in the relaxed atmosphere of the raft contributed to his experience. "The rafting was a very important aspect for bonding. We talked, shared food and were physically close."

It would appear that the elements of most meaning for Doug were the times of interpersonal sharing: emotional sharing, physical sharing through food or assistance, and the cognitive sharing of ideas in games. Times of greatest significance to Doug were when individuals were drawn together to solve a problem, or, simply enjoying each other's company in a raft or around a fire. Doug also found the weekend experience gave him a opportunity to discover more about each individual. "I learnt that some people really stand out and others really hang back. Some show emotions, others hide them." The outdoor trip enabled him

to "know what each other is like and the habits, strengths and weaknesses."

Doug discovered that participation in the group activities enhanced his interest and feelings for his peers as well as his need to become accepted by the group. He explained, "After [the] cooperative games I really wanted to be a part of the group. I wanted to find more about each person, because social acceptance happened. It brought people together more." Activities that centred around the group context, such as the games and the fire, facilitated group interaction and thus fostered interpersonal acceptance and trust. "The campfire games and the cooperative games brought us closer. Night times were especially good as a group because they allowed us to really get to know one another."

Doug was particularly surprised at all the changes that took place within the fifty hour journey. When I encouraged him to elaborate on what changes he exclaimed, "Wow, you could write a book on all the changes that took place. Everything changed." Doug felt that his attitude flowed like that of a wave. During the early stages of the journey his enthusiasm and that of the group's mounted steadily, similar to an ocean wave climbing out of the sea on its rush to the shore. Exhausted by the wind on Sunday, Doug's

emotional wave curled over and crashed onto the sand, its remnants sucked out to sea with the receding tide. But after the wind had abated and the struggle was but a memory, Doug's attitude seemed to catch another incoming breaker, and rose to higher heights in the days following the experience.

The group's feeling of togetherness, sympathy and caring for one another was barely detectable to Doug prior to the journey. "We started the trip on our own", Doug explained. As the trip progressed Doug began to feel closest to his tent group and by the trip's end his lab group as well. It is apparent that these cohesive feelings grew quickly over time. Doug draws the temporary loss of Taryn and the strong emotional concern that was shown for her as an example of the group's solidarity. Summarizing other changes that took place on the weekend journey Doug listed, "Changes in attitude, togetherness [closeness], weather, energy, emotions, confidence, trust and relationships [were all evident]." Doug succinctly captured the meaning of the trip for him, as well as the changes that took place on the trip, with this statement; "We started as individuals and finished as a group." In summarizing his experience Doug recounted,

I felt that I gained a lot of information, friendship and memories that I will remember forever. The most

meaningful thing to me was making lasting friendships with my lab group members. Trips such as these bring people together and really add to group unity and coherence. We had fun as a group, we fought as a group, learned as a group and listened as a group. It was an excellent experience for everyone.... It's a life time experience that won't go forgotten.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE PATHS CONVERGE TO A COMMON JOURNEY

When I reflected upon the co-researchers' interpretations of their wilderness experiences, I realized that each was distinctive, each held different meanings, understandings and subjectivism. But while all of their personal paths were unique, as singular as a snowflake landing upon an outstretched palm, all bore commonalities. Evidence of their solitary paths and common journey, illustrated by the themes that emerged from their wilderness weekend journey, are presented in Table 10. The co-researchers' individual themes that emerged from the data are indicated by an "X" in Table 10.

Table 10

Co-researchers' Emerged Themes

|                                                                                                                            | Karen | Sam | Nancy | Ron | Doug |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|------|
| Valuing Nature:                                                                                                            |       |     |       |     |      |
| Appreciation of and Connectedness<br>to Natural Environment                                                                | X     | X   | X     | X   | X    |
| Valuing the Natural Environment                                                                                            | X     | X   |       |     |      |
| Self-Discovery:                                                                                                            |       |     |       |     |      |
| Personal Calming--Solitude                                                                                                 | X     | X   | X     | X   | X    |
| Coping with the Challenge                                                                                                  | X     | X   | X     | X   | X    |
| Clarification of Personal Values,<br>Heightened Intrapersonal<br>Awareness and Identifying<br>Feelings and Aspects of Self | X     | X   | X     | X   | X    |
| Change in Emotions                                                                                                         | X     | X   | X     | X   | X    |
| Perceived Threats to Personal<br>Well Being                                                                                | X     | X   | X     | X   |      |
| Tension over Lost Study Time                                                                                               | X     |     | X     |     | X    |
| Empowerment through Accomplishment                                                                                         | X     | X   | X     |     |      |
| Profound Positive Emotions                                                                                                 | X     | X   |       |     |      |
| Empowerment through Responsibility                                                                                         | X     |     |       |     |      |
| Empowerment through Self-Confidence                                                                                        |       | X   |       |     |      |
| Clashing of Realities                                                                                                      |       | X   |       |     |      |
| Trip's End (Inner Tension)                                                                                                 |       |     | X     |     |      |
| Self with Others:                                                                                                          |       |     |       |     |      |
| Disclosure of Selves                                                                                                       | X     | X   | X     | X   | X    |
| Closeness to Others through Shared<br>Common Experience                                                                    | X     | X   | X     | X   | X    |
| Feeling an Accepted Member of<br>the Group (Belonging)                                                                     |       | X   |       | X   | X    |
| Cooperation                                                                                                                | X     | X   | X     | X   | X    |
| Uncovering Real Others                                                                                                     | X     |     | X     | X   | X    |
| Elusiveness of Escape from<br>Daily Life                                                                                   | X     |     | X     |     |      |
| Interpersonal Understanding,<br>Openness and Acceptance                                                                    |       |     | X     |     |      |
| Leadership                                                                                                                 |       |     | X     |     |      |
| Empowerment through Awareness<br>of Equality                                                                               |       |     |       | X   |      |
| Caring                                                                                                                     |       |     |       |     | X    |
| Conflict                                                                                                                   |       |     |       |     | X    |
| Evaluation of Self to Peers                                                                                                | X     |     |       |     |      |

Common Paths

The reality of everyday life originates in one's thoughts and actions and through these is sustained as real. An individual's reality exists only in the way in which that person views their life-world in relation to their emotional or active life. Each individual objectifies reality from a unique biography and a distinctive perspective. They understand their world as they interpret it based on what has meaning to them. What is real to an individual is whatever excites and stimulates their interest. Reality is, therefore, a subjective term as an individual defines their reality according to their personal stock of knowledge, interest and biographical situation (Schutz, 1973). The themes listed in Table 10 represent the way in which the co-researchers, each with a personal stock of knowledge, a distinct biography and unique interests, (their subjectivity), constructed meaning from their weekend journey and in doing so, defined their reality in wilderness, or objectified their world.

While each of the co-researchers' paths was unique, it is evident from Table 10 that several of the themes that emerged from the students' journeys, were also shared with all co-researchers. Hence, while each of the co-researchers' trails was distinctive, individual tracks



winding their separate ways through the forest, their paths converged toward a common journey. This collective journey, shared by all co-researchers, is illustrated in Table 11 with its presentation of recurrent themes, (a process of objectification), that emerged from the co-researchers' experiences.

Table 11

Clusters of Common Themes

Valuing Nature:

- Appreciation of / Connectedness to Natural Environment

Self-Discovery:

- Personal Calming--Solitude
- Coping with the Challenge
- Heightened Intrapersonal Awareness
- Perceived Threats to Personal Well Being
- Change in Emotions

Self with Others:

- Disclosure of Selves
- Closeness to Others through Shared Common Experience
- Uncovering Real Others
- Cooperation

The themes presented in Table 11 represent the way in which the co-researchers commonly interpreted their wilderness weekend experience. In short, the themes

illustrate what objective and subjective portions of the journey had collective meaning for them. The students each travelled paths that were characteristic from all others. But, the fact that they share the trail of humanity, the fact that they are all human, compelled them toward a shared common world. A discussion of these collective human characteristics that weave an empathically prevalent human experience, demonstrated by common meanings and themes that emerged from the wilderness weekend journey, follows.

#### Change in emotions.

This study has clearly demonstrated, both through statistical analyses and qualitative interpretation of the co-researchers' rich experiences, that the wilderness group weekend journeys brought their respective students significantly closer together. Furthermore, the qualitative study discovered that the enriched journey influenced the students to re-construct their weekend social reality and redefine themselves. For instance, both Doug and Karen exclaimed that during their weekend experience "everything changed--everything." Karen elaborated that these changes included her "feelings, attitudes, confidence and social position." She added that, "We had no choice [but to re-negotiate a new culture]. It was like an unreal situation, yet it has never been so real." On a personal note, Sam reflected, "[I] experienced a big change in how I felt

before and after the trip, from anxious to great-- incredible. It was a really big difference." Swept into a novel environment Karen, Doug, Sam and their peers found themselves in a world of new objects, social structures and profoundly novel and enriching meanings. This transition from a taken for granted everyday life to a wilderness life seemed to have altered the way in which they viewed their life-world. Their biographies had been modified and they began to look at their lives through new lenses; they viewed their lives from different perspectives and distinguished trails through their social world to which they had previously been oblivious.

I believe that the co-researchers' change in emotions and the meanings derived from their experiences were a consequence of their transition from their known, everyday life-worlds to their relatively unknown, pristine, cooperative social reality of wilderness group life. In the students' everyday life meaning toward objects had been negotiated and understood; they formed the basis of their common sense knowledge. The students thought this common sense knowledge of negotiated meanings would carry through from everyday life to wilderness living intact--unaltered. This belief proved to be unfounded and left the students with much interpretation and negotiation to rapidly accomplish. As individuals in this novel environment, the

students were encouraged by the leaders and inspired by the environment to redefine their selves, and, as a group, they were compelled to negotiate a new social culture. This rapid but profound redefinition of selves and renegotiation of social culture may be better understood through symbolic interactionism, where the meaning of the co-researchers' experiences and how their group reconstructed their social reality may be interpreted. Here, according to Denzin (1970), humans are capable of making their own thoughts and activities objects of analysis. The students, therefore, manipulated symbols and oriented their own activities toward the objects they discovered in wilderness. Once they had negotiated the meanings of these objects, their social conduct toward one another flowed along the lines of a renegotiated social reality, far removed from the one they lived in everyday life. These significant and unexpected alterations changed their emotional selves and the ways in which they related to peers.

Appreciation of and connectedness to natural environment.

Another obscure and unrealized path that emerged was that of appreciation of, and connectedness to, the natural environment. Immersed in wilderness, many for the first time, the students began to question society's values and their "taken for granted" everyday lifestyle. They began to

understand that through our society's "progress," we have chosen to become insulated from the reality of our planet--shielded from the authenticity of life itself. Year after year, generation after generation, Western society has distanced itself more and more from the natural world. For example, in our artificial environment the rhythms of the moon barely penetrate the glow of our urban lights. In fact, in our cities, surrounded by the high tension of power-lines (perhaps a metaphor of urban stress) we seem to have abolished the night.

There, the glare of electric light extends the unforgiving day far into a night restless with the eerie glow of neon. We walk the asphalt, not on the good earth; we look up at neon, not at the marvel of the starry heavens. Seldom do we have a chance to see virgin darkness, unmarred by electric light, seldom can we recall the ageless rhythm of nature and of the moral law which our bodies and spirits yet echo beneath the heavy layer of forgetting. The world of artifacts and constructs with which we have surrounded ourselves knows neither a law nor a rhythm; in its context, even rising and resting come to seem arbitrary. We ourselves have constructed that world for our dwelling place, replacing rude nature with the artifacts of techné [sic], yet increasingly we confess ourselves bewildered strangers within it, "alienated",

"contingently thrown" into its anonymous machinery, tempted to abolish the conflict between our meaningful humanity and our mechanical life-world by convincing ourselves ... that we too are but machines." (Kohak, 1984, p.X).

Physical comfort in everyday life is now seldom farther than a switch. No longer do we haul ice for refrigeration, rely on animals for transportation, or worry about how we will start the next fire to ensure our survival during a cold winter's night. We have succeeded, albeit temporarily, in isolating our physical and emotional beings from the land, and, in the process we stand in grave danger of losing a critical portion of our selves--our clarity of vision. Enveloped by modern-day constructs we tend to lose sight, literally as well as metaphorically, of the rhythms and moral significance of nature. During their wilderness journey the students of this study began to realize that their lives had been obscured by the mechanical order of our society's artifacts. The question that arose in their shadows was, "Is this 'progress' success"? Through their weekend exposure to wilderness living they became more aware of nature's intrinsic value and, for the first time, began to question humankind's drive to annihilate wilderness areas in pursuit of progress--an insatiable quest for a "higher" quality of life. The students no longer "blindly" accepted



their societal values and everyday way of life and began to question it from a new and more informed perspective.

Wilderness is a surrounding where modern, relied-upon conveniences of everyday life are not available. In wilderness, individuals must rely on resources at hand for their comfort and ultimate survival. Basic human needs such as eating and sleeping, as well as coping with the natural elements, are all very different from life in urban society. Wilderness living provides its dwellers with the opportunity to experience a segment of their primal history, a long forgotten and abandoned portion of their essential being. Warmth under a clear night, sufficient water and nourishment, comfortable facilities for defecation, dryness and transportation, are all taken for granted in everyday life. But during the wilderness weekend journey these basic needs became potential challenges for the student wilderness dwellers. These new demands awakened their slumbering bodies and re-focused academically-centred minds to the essence of life; wilderness rekindled the reality of humanity's interconnectedness with the natural world. Wilderness represented a novel, challenging, and meaningful mode of living. This physical alteration and coping with the challenge of living in a wilderness environment seemed to support the foundation of the experience for the students and nurture the growth of other derived meanings for them.



Wilderness, though, presented much more than its physical grandeur and associated challenges to the students. The students began to understand that nature was much more than a recreational area and that wilderness had more to offer them than pretty scenery. They sensed greater depth during and after the trip to the intrinsic value of wilderness; that nature and people mutually define one another and that nature encourages the dialectic between self and other. It was in wilderness that they began to feel whole and discover elements of selves they did not know. Nature, a celebration of life, demonstrated living with meaning. A spiritual landscape seemed to exist within the physical landscape. Like poetry, wilderness was inexplicably coherent; it was transcendent in its meaning, and elevated a consideration of human life (Lopez, 1986).

Wilderness defies accurate evaluation; it retains an identity of its own, much deeper and more intricate than we can ever know. The students began to understand this; they sensed that wilderness must be approached with an open mind and felt its variety of expressions--colour, textures, weather, and life. As Lopez (1986) argued, wilderness' mystery must be accepted as wisdom to be experienced--sensations that are felt when something sacred reveals itself.

Perhaps one of the profound mysteries of wilderness is its ability to provide an impeccable and indisputable integrity we want for ourselves. Upon entering wilderness and opening oneself to it, we often strike a lasting and reciprocal relationship with nature. Through the beauty of landscape or its frightening environmental conditions, wilderness affects us. Additionally, it provides us with metaphors and symbols through which we can explore the edges of its mysteries as well as the secrets of our own selves. If we openly enter the land willing to accept its plethora of intra- and interpersonal experiences we have with it, many difficult to articulate, we may establish a stronger relationship with nature from which greater self-understanding, self-confidence and interpersonal relationships can emerge. With this bond it becomes possible to transfer these enhanced feelings of self and dignified relationships with others and nature back into our everyday life. Each relationship, (with self, other and nature), is formed with the same principle. Through nature we can understand that, "the things in the land fit together perfectly, even though they are always changing" (Lopez, 1986, p.405). Similarly, we may wish to order and arrange our life in the same way as nature's. For if we emulate nature we can balance our selves and our relationships with others more appropriately. Hence, to be open to nature and to try to understand her wisdom and richness can mean the

unfolding of our human life. Ultimately, it is the enrichment of the human spirit that draws us to wilderness and helps us to appreciate her inherent value.

Coping with the challenge.

Prior to the wind on Sunday morning, the level of physical adventure during the trip was relatively low. The only real physical challenge for the group was to paddle the 72 kilometre distance in two days. While it was undoubtedly tiring, the canoeing was not charged with intense emotions of fear, uncertainty, or extreme physical exertion. In relation to Solomon's (1980) Opponent Process Theory (Figure 3, Chapter 8), the students had not been adequately aroused by physical risk to venture very far from the theory's "emotional baseline level." However, during the wind on Sunday many seemingly stressful negative elements swiftly became a penetrating reality for the canoeists and drastically altered their level of arousal.

Prior to canoeing into the horrendous headwind on Sunday, the group had negotiated a cohesive social reality that inspired interpersonal elements, (such as trust, caring, empathy, and respect), seldom found to the same degree in everyday life. However, it is vital to recognize that this new, somewhat surreal, social reality in

wilderness had been constructed in a physically comfortable, secure and friendly milieu; an idealistic culture unknowingly built upon a fragile foundation. The wind on Sunday drastically altered this sheltered, peaceful emotional, social and physical environment and rapidly transformed it into what the students' perceived to be a brutal battle for survival. According to Solomon's (1980) Opponent Process Theory (Figure 3), all emotions brought about by a novel, unconditioned stimulus are almost identical in magnitude to the stimulus intensity. Therefore, the negative emotions experienced by the students during the wind helped them to later attain resultant positive emotions almost equal in magnitude to their previous negative emotions; fear and frustration during the experience was subsequently replaced with satisfaction, pride and further awareness. The students, though, reacted not to their physical reality, which to an experienced canoeist was merely an inconvenience, but most importantly to the way in which they perceived it; to them it was an arduous physical, emotional and social struggle that temporarily fractured interpersonal relations and forced many students to re-evaluate their emotions toward their peers and their beliefs about wilderness living. For example, Doug explained,

Sunday morning was still close knit until we hit that wind factor on Sunday, then people really started to

get cranky and complaining to each other. If somebody had a problem with someone they wouldn't just tell them nicely, there wasn't a lot of sympathy towards others at that point.

It was not until the students had an opportunity to experience their solo activity that they had a chance to more objectively reflect upon their windy canoeing struggle. Alone in wilderness, safely tucked in under a tree, the negative paddling experience began to transform itself into a more positive one. As theorized by the Opponent Process Theory (Figure 3), the students moved from a negative state to a positive state. The retrospective interpretation that took place during the solo seemed to help draw further meaning from this emotional transition and amplify the positive effect emotions. Their success in the venture made them intensely proud of their accomplishment. The negative aspects became less meaningful, allowing more positive emotions to prevail. Doug recalled,

We were all really tired after that paddle ...

Everybody when they came off that river they were cursing and swearing and a lot of bad things were said. By the time everybody got rested up a bit and had some food, and we got to spend some idle time by ourselves, which was good, I really liked that, I think that helped everybody calm down and think over how the week-

end went and why they were there and what they accomplished, what they had learnt.

The challenge of the trip tested the socially constructed reality that the group had built; the challenge refined and strengthened it, and proved the students' commitment toward one another. Prior to the wind no rules had been negotiated on how to cope with challenges of this magnitude, consequently, during the wind some of its supports came crashing down while others held firm. During the wind the students were forced to confront a new and threatening reality. "Reality confrontation", as coined by Gibson (1977), is the "self evaluation that occurs when a subject has to test [themselves] both in relation to others and the environment where consequences have meaning." The wind, an environmental challenge, instantly awakened the students to recognize that their environmental and social reality had changed beyond their control. This radical shift brought the group out of their constructed "fantasy" world, forced them to confront the challenge and modify and align their social constructs towards it. In this situation the instructors did not take the conventional position of assigning preconceived roles or instructions to the students. Instead, Martin and Anne gave the students physical and intellectual space so that the dialectic between self and the other was allowed to unfold. The



students were given the individual freedom and responsibility to interpret and objectify the situation. They were encouraged by the leaders to rely on their biographies and bring their background of experiences of self into context within the difficult paddling conditions so that they could make personal choices in the situation, confront and directly and immediately influence their own reality. Consequently, new selves emerged that had previously been hidden in order to determine ways to interpret and resolve the situation; and, the students were compelled to view themselves and their peers from a new perspective, an attitude that may have taken years to surface in everyday life. This challenge was one of the most meaningful collective elements for the group. For what they initially perceived to be a physical contest later proved to have significant meaning and value for them. Individually and collectively, the students were undeniably proud that they had successfully encountered the physical, social and emotional challenges presented by the wind.

This study has demonstrated that meaningful and appropriate adventure challenges refine and accelerate the development of a wilderness group's socially constructed reality. Nevertheless, while challenge and adventure are substantial components of outdoor programmes promoting personal growth by influencing groups to socially



renegotiate their socially constructed reality, it is absolutely essential to respect the importance of Duffy's Inverted-U Hypothesis (Figure 2) and Mortlock's (1978) Four Stage of Adventure Model (see Chapter VIII). These important theories argue that in order to achieve maximal growth, educational programmes' levels of adventure must remain appropriate to groups' skill level, and receptivity, as well as to the trips' objectives. Through symbolic interaction, appropriate levels of risk will enhance groups to alter their human group life in an ongoing, ever changing negotiation. As Blumer (1969) believed, group life is filled with the fitting of personal behaviours to those of others through a dual process of definition and interpretation. This process was particularly evident in changing the environmental conditions of the journey where individuals' personal well-beings were challenged. During the journey, as the level of adventure fluctuated, so did the social situation and personal patterns of behaviour; thus, under the continual process of negotiation, the social reality altered in accordance with the given situation. Therefore, while the negotiation of individuals' social reality will always be in process of development, it will be forced to be renegotiated more rapidly, and with greater depth, under increasing levels of adventure. Successful groups, remaining flexible toward adapting their personal patterns of behaviour to changing environmental conditions,

will consequently accelerate and strengthen their social development. Therefore, varying levels of adventure challenges have strong potential to accelerate intra- and interpersonal growth through heightened symbolic interaction.

Perceived threats to personal well being.

During the journey, due to the primordial aspects of wilderness, the students were less able to exercise control over their living environment than in everyday life. The predictability of the wilderness experience was reduced by the lack of control they had in and over the environment, a novelty for most of the students. Faced with more unknowns and less comfort and control than found in their home lives, varying levels of uncertainty were continually present. For most, this uncertainty created anxieties toward their physical and emotional safety as well as questions of social acceptance in a new social context. For example, students who had no previous group wilderness experience had no concept of what type of social reality could be negotiated in wilderness. With the exception of the challenge of canoeing into the wind, the students' anxieties seemed to culminate the day before the trip and only remain robust up until their departure from the university. Once in wilderness, however, most of these uncertainties and related anxieties quickly dissipated and were replaced by positive

emotions. Karen illustrated, "At the beginning I felt nervous about some things and by the end these feelings were insignificant. I felt confident and safe and I realized that even a [canoe] dump would not be all that bad."

Offering further explanation, Karen added,

I'm nervous in novel situations ... This feeling changed to confidence as I improved my paddling and made me feel good about myself. [Before the trip] I thought I had lost my physical aptitude. I thought I couldn't try anything new. It was a real kick to my self-esteem. Canoeing made me feel more confident about myself in general. Now I do not say 'you can't'.

Much of the students' uncertainty before and during the trip may be considered positive, as it enhanced the perceived adventure level of the trip. Within acceptable limits, this unpredictability and loss of convenience, comfort and control, can create new stocks of knowledge for the students living in wilderness. Their subsequent re-negotiation of meaning to objects in wilderness formed a new and comforting reality for them. This drastic, and for some shocking shift in corporeality, subsequently led to unusually rich emotional and social realities; a further example of Solomon's (1980) Opponent Process Theory.

The vast majority of the students' pre-trip anxieties

were unfounded and were generated from not knowing or understanding the realities of the trip. Having never been placed in a situation where the physical conditions were not predictable, they could not fathom the possible personal benefits of participating in such a journey. They were more anxious of the unknowns than anything concrete. So much so, in fact, that most did not want to partake in the trip at all. From a leadership perspective, it is evident that the more students can identify with the various components of a wilderness experience the less anxious and more receptive they will be towards participating in such an endeavour.

Personal calming--solitude.

The students' emotional and social realities, discovered during weekend wilderness experience, stood in stark contrast to their daily university lives. The stress and anxiety of attaining good grades, competition among peers and the feeling of unimportance in the chaotic web of university life composes the day to day emotional and social realities for many students. Students' find life in the university setting fiercely competitive and remarkably socially comparative. During their university years many students perceive their grade-point average to be a strong indication of their self-worth. Relatively uninvolved in their own learning, many sit passively in classrooms and digest masses of information provided to them between their

scheduled movements from class to class. Unfortunately, for some, this material is no more meaningful to them than a grade on an examination, and, ultimately their grade point average. A strict timetable of assignments and examinations constantly measures their assimilated knowledge, thus helping to reinforce interpersonal competition and comparison. Living in this world, course grades open and close the doors of opportunity and often result in students feeling abandoned, nervous and alone in their individualistic "dog-eat-dog" world. It was from this stressful social context that the majority of students partaking in the weekend experience embarked on their wilderness journey.

During the weekend wilderness experience the leaders created an entirely different micro-culture than the students anticipated or were accustomed to. Using the methods, techniques and activities discussed in the forthcoming Wilderness Personal Growth Model, (such as encouraged self-disclosure and cooperative games), the leaders rapidly brought the students from their stressful university world to that of a wilderness reality; a reality that valued cooperation, respect, warmth and equality; a world that encouraged students to trust and open themselves to their real selves and to others. They were encouraged to be themselves, not role directed others; and, they were

encouraged to accept others for who they really were. This wilderness intersubjective reality was the antithesis of the students' everyday university life from which they had just departed. Nancy reflected, "Here [university life] it is just a me, me, me reality. Out there [wilderness], it is a we, we, we reality." Participants of varying backgrounds, interests and academic abilities rallied around a common goal and took responsibility for the success of their journey. Many students on the trip expressed gratitude and felt relief to escape from the stressors pressuring their lives. Sam expressed after the trip,

Being under stress here [university] all the time becomes almost the norm. You don't realize how much stress you're under, and once I was out there I realized, 'holy God, how much stress' ... since I started university two years ago that's [during the trip] the most relaxed I've been.

Through my discussions with Sam and others I became disturbed at how much pressure we, as a society, impose on ourselves and others and the prevalence and destructive power such an imbalance of negative stress generates. I was startled to think that Sam, experiencing immense pressure, was not even a month into his fall semester after a lengthy summer break. The Globe and Mail (1992) confirmed my findings in their report that 90% of freshmen get sick in



their first four weeks on campus, a measure of the copious stress of adjustment from high-school to university life.

In light of this startling phenomenon, it seems only prudent to encourage freshmen students to partake in well led wilderness group experiences that are appropriate to their needs and situations. One may speculate that the social reality the students consequently re-negotiated during their weekend experience undoubtedly reduced their stress of adjustment to university and enhanced their undergraduate lives: socially, emotionally and, plausibly, academically.

Heightened intrapersonal awareness.

The contrast of everyday social life to the social reality of outdoor living was an astonishing illumination to the inexperienced participants. Their everyday lives seemed to nurture independence and place less emphasis and value toward close neighbourly relations than in wilderness. For example, medical needs in our society are ensured through government medicare systems; and, social welfare nets guard us during times of unemployment. In old age our governments meet our basic needs; no longer must we rely on friends and family for our survival. This modern day reality lies in contrast to that of our forbears and the social reality of outdoor living. Materialistic wealth, a primary value in



today's society, is replaced in wilderness by that of the other--our fellow companion. For simply stated, on an wilderness excursion the well-being of our companions is a direct investment in our own welfare. Outdoor education seems to promote a value system similar to that of our ancestors; a way of life that has been forgotten by many in modern society's rush for "success." But what is success? In today's world it is often defined as owning a large home and several cars. Modern society seems to equate material wealth with happiness, as evidenced through our daily bombardment of consumer advertising. Conversely, in an outdoor milieu, the sum of one's belongings is carried upon one's back. It is in this reality that the students began to experience and appreciate that the meaning of life is richer than a vast collection of possessions; that happiness and substantial meaning can be derived not through personal effects but through the sharing and giving of one's self. Everyday life advocates people to find instant gratification through the shallow demonstration of possessions; and, society follows in the belief that objects representing tangible wealth reflect their personalities and demonstrate the illusion of their happiness to others. Others, content to wait for a deeper level of satisfaction, portray their value structure and derive meaningful lives by caring for and loving others; wilderness naturally exemplifies the latter. For example, Nancy felt that, "The natural

environment helped me to foster different feelings and realities than home." Similarly Sam echoed, "The trip influenced my thinking. I feel different about some things. Now I look at life through the bigger picture."

During and after the trip, due to the rapid, unexpected and compelling transition of their realities, (everyday life to wilderness and back to everyday life), the students seemed to have a difficult time conceptualizing their feelings and emotions. After living in a wilderness reality they struggled to understand the meanings of their experiences. For many, this inability to grasp and express these meanings was a frustrating revelation. Nancy recorded in her journal, "Time is different, challenges are different. But it's more than that. It is so hard to verbalize. To get a handle on it." Similarly, overwhelmed by profound emotions, Sam wrote, "I really seem to have trouble getting my feelings across, especially the powerful ones. I just cannot match my feelings with words.... It's almost impossible to let anyone know exactly how I felt." For the most part the students knew how to grasp and express the meanings of objects found in everyday life. But they soon realized that these understandings and meanings of everyday objects, including everyday language, were often inadequate in their wilderness reality. This was a significant realization. Raised and educated in a modern

world, students discovered that objects (words, emotions, subjective meanings) found in everyday life, heralded as superior, were deemed less significant in their world of wilderness. They learned that their world-view was incomplete. They learned that a world-view can never be complete.

Furthermore, living in an outdoor world, dependent on personal judgement and skill as well as the resources of one's travelling companions for survival, was a novel and harsh reality for most students. Thrust into a wilderness environment, they discovered that many of the presuppositions, structures and significations of their common-sense every-day world were under tension with the novel outdoor lived reality. As members of Western society, they were part of an on-going world of everyday affairs, taking their existence in its essential being for granted. They discovered that much of what is taken for granted in their everyday world was either unattainable or involved a struggle to achieve in the natural life-world. For example, communication with significant others, privacy and modern conveniences. Paradoxically, much of what is taken for granted in the natural life-world is more difficult to attain in their everyday world, such as solitude, peace, thoughtful reflection and meaningful interpersonal relations. Karen reflected,

Pleasures in life are taken for granted [in everyday life]. We are too occupied with trivial things and complain about them ... We are not thankful for what we have. My altered life's perspective is that you only live once. Why go through life full of stress and concern?

#### Cooperation.

This study has demonstrated, both through the qualitative and quantitative investigations, that both the cooperative games and subsequent cooperation among group members was a meaningful and common path shared by all co-researchers. In fact, in the comparative investigation, the enriched group rated the cooperative games as the second most meaningful component of their trip (Table 4 in Chapter IV). In support of this finding, Doug reflected, "The most meaningful things were the [cooperative] games before the campfire. They really brought the group together and we really learned from each other's mistakes."

The socially constructed reality of the weekend valued and promoted interpersonal cooperation. Cooperation was first encouraged by the leaders through the use of the cooperative games. The activities provided students with conditions through which they could interact in a new manner. These conditions, not ordinarily found in everyday

life, focused the groups upon themselves and allowed for values, such as cooperation, listening to others and respect, to emerge. Previously acceptable limits of interpersonal space and touching were redefined. A student recalled;

I was impressed by the cooperative games. There was absolutely no hesitancy in crawling around over everybody's bodies and stuff and that was kind of cool and most other settings or atmospheres that you couldn't have that achieved. And so quickly too. Really in 24 hours people were doing that.

The games encouraged the students to interact with one another through the use of novel symbols, and consequently, to re-negotiate an empowering social reality of new rules and expectations. Restrictive everyday life symbols and social rules were less valued and supported by the group seeking greater freedom and less social inhibition. For example, it became accepted and encouraged to let go of oneself and play with few reservations. The cooperative games "made me remember what it was like to have fun and not feel childish for doing so," Nancy reminisced. Childhood values, games and even behaviours were redefined as "normal." The students found this cooperative and playful milieu refreshing. Sam explained, "Sometimes the games that are the most childish are the most fun. We all need to act like that once in a while.... It goes along with dealing

with life's pressures. Being a kid equals no pressure." It had been a long time for most students since they had not felt compelled to conform to the strict social rules of everyday life.

During the journey the cooperation that emerged in the games was naturally transferred to wilderness living. Cooperation in camp chores, paddling, loading and unloading canoes became the norm; it became a standard which was fostered and supported by redefined social rules. Nancy reflected that, "Society promotes self centredness whereas the outdoors promotes group centredness. For example, there is no way one person would succeed canoeing alone in the wind, we needed one another." The contrast of the redefined social wilderness reality of unconditional cooperation to everyday life was a meaningful and common thread among the students.

Closeness to others through shared common experience.

The comparative study of the standard and enriched groups' journeys revealed significant ( $p < .05$ ) increases in the students' feelings of closeness toward their respective trip members before and after the weekend journeys. Additionally, the qualitative study found the students to admit great surprise to the extent their feelings of closeness toward their peers had amplified before, during



and after their wilderness experience. Furthermore, they were astounded that these feelings toward one another could be attained during such a short period of time. Ron expressed, "The trip was something totally different from what we are used to. Socially, everyone acted differently towards one another. Comfort level between people was accelerated. We were strangers and then overnight we were best friends." Karen echoed a similar reaction, "For such a big group I am surprised we got so close. When you get in with a little group, okay ... You get close with that group because they are small and you get to share their experience .... But a huge group of 30 people"! The re-negotiated social reality tore down interpersonal barriers and encouraged students to accept, appreciate and reach out to their peers. "It was a different situation than you get in most other things you do," Sam stated emphatically; "A lot of society pressures were gone, and I think right away everybody felt accepted by everybody else, so that made a big difference."

The students left on their wilderness experience expecting to live in a very different environment than in everyday life. The dichotomy between these two physical worlds is obvious; however, and most importantly, in wilderness the students did not expect to re-negotiate their social reality, assign new meanings toward familiar objects



or discover new objects. Few realized that over a weekend the everyday social context in which they lived was able to be negotiated to such an extreme. Seemingly trapped in their university life, most believed that their social reality with university peers offered little chance of reform. They accepted their relatively impersonal and competitive university society because, living in this environment, they had experienced nothing else; they knew nothing else; they had few other bases for comparison and accepted the fact that it could never change. They were like prisoners, trapped in their own social culture; and a prisoner does not know that he or she is a prisoner until he or she escapes. Ron recounted, "The social atmosphere was quite different. I did not expect that." The re-negotiated social reality was a revealing shock for the students. They realized that their wilderness social reality encouraged people to feel good about being themselves. This social context fostered acceptance and was less judgemental than in everyday life. Surprised, Ron expressed, "I came back and I felt like one of the group. I felt important." Obviously excited about the journey, Sam reflected,

It was a different situation than you get in most other things you do. A lot of society pressures were gone, and I think right away everybody felt accepted by everybody else, so that made a big difference, there wasn't any of the sexual part of it that you get in a

lot of other things. Everybody just felt really comfortable with everybody else, and so you felt real .... you didn't have to try to be something you weren't; you could just be yourself.

Disclosure of selves.

Once in wilderness, the leaders of the journey proactively encouraged the students, through sharing circles, to construct a social reality that encouraged a level of self-disclosure far greater than in everyday life. Most of the students felt uncomfortable when first prompted to reveal their personal thoughts and feelings; they felt awkward exposing portions of their selves usually hidden in everyday life. However, the support and role modelling of the leaders and the students' universal feeling of uneasiness propelled them to negotiate new situational social rules and enhanced levels of self-disclosure with peers that were more appropriate, and eventually seemed more natural in their wilderness environment.

The re-negotiated social reality that was established over the weekend placed all of the students on the same social level. Karen explained, "I felt comfortable taking a social risk because everyone else had to." The more they disclosed the more the students, like Nancy, realized,

That the people pretty much have the same fears and

expectations, therefore I feel more a part of the group.... If you expose your real feelings in our society you are making yourself vulnerable to judgement and ridicule. As the trip progressed people were less intimidated to share their views. Their feelings and beliefs were respected because people wanted to share their feelings and views too.

The students were members of a relatively conservative, modern, Western society; an individualistic culture valuing independence. This is a community that does not advocate openness, especially to most peers or acquaintances. Karen revealed,

This trip we were "forced" to tell people how we feel and really its so irregular to do that in your normal life. I am just not an emotional person. I don't share my emotions even with close people ... but with this group the beginning was a little hard ... but by the end there wasn't really too much I was afraid to say. I could have said anything. I felt comfortable because everybody else was. We were all comfortable.

As the trip progressed new conditions arose and had to be labelled by the group, conditions that were alien in the students' university social reality. One of these new and meaningful conditions included the campfire, as evidenced by both the quantitative and qualitative studies. The

comparative study discovered that both the standard and enriched groups ranked the campfire within the top three most meaningful elements of their respective canoe journeys. This finding, that campfire atmospheres can facilitate meaningful and positive group interaction, is supported by Hemstreet's (1987) study of group process and campfires. The journeys' campfires, with group members seated at the same level in a circle, enabled all members of the groups to see one another. The foreground presented their faces aglow from the fire's reflected light, the background a seemingly black void. The students felt the warmth from the fire, a metaphor for the warmth they sensed from their peers in their sharing of honest emotions. Doug emphasized, "The campfire [Friday evening] was really terrific. We played all kinds of games which enabled us to meet others and get to know what they like and dislike. It felt good--the beginning of our unity as a group." In this new social reality interpersonal respect was valued and ridicule became totally unacceptable. Nancy explained,

I think that as people were honest with their feelings, anxieties and expression to themselves and to the rest of the group, that by doing that they became very vulnerable to being laughed at or put down. When they were respected by other members of the group and empathized with, they became even more willing to share even more honestly. As well, games where the sharing

and pooling of resources and ideas was imperative, helped to further foster that drawing together. I don't know why this occurred in this situation when it doesn't seem to in others, but I found it interesting that no one really put down anyone else when they didn't catch on to a campfire game or when they shared their feelings. I think perhaps that when you are really honest and genuine regarding personal feelings and self doubts that people can relate to that and feel safer in expressing how they feel as well.

In addition to bringing peers closer together, the newly created social culture, promoting appropriate self-disclosure, helped the students to gain further awarenesses from their intra- and interpersonal journey. Listening to others express their thoughts encouraged them to reflect upon their own feelings and emotions. Karen, for example, recounted, "I knew how I felt, but then it was funny, everything everybody else said I felt too and I always agreed.... I thought, 'Hey, that's the way I feel too,' but I didn't realize I felt that way until they said it." Most social cultures do not encourage personal reflection, to take time to think about one's experiences and one's responses to events. This wilderness journey's culture prompted students not only to think about their feelings but to express them as well. Nancy reflected,

I think that just identifying those feelings and being able to express them more ... This was good for me because a lot of people don't spend a lot of time thinking about how they feel, so I realized how important that is ... Just identifying feelings that you have and being able to recognize how do you feel about something and listening to yourself.... A big part of knowing yourself and communicating is being able to recognize how you feel and explain those feelings. This trip helped me with this.

The re-negotiated openness of the social group helped its members to become more aware of and reinforce their intra- and interpersonal feelings.

#### Uncovering real others.

During the wilderness journey it is most plausible that the students took on roles and acted out their roles on the dramaturgical stage of a large group wilderness weekend journey. The students acted out their roles according to the symbols they found and meanings of the objects they negotiated during the trip. On this wilderness "stage", according to Goffman (1959), the students presented themselves in the semblance of a character projected by the referent other students and leaders of the trip. However, through the mutually trusting atmosphere the leaders created during the weekend and the culture the students negotiated



in wilderness, I believe that the students "acted" out the role of socially acceptable and conforming characters less on the trip than they did in everyday life. I believe that they took on roles in wilderness that more accurately depicted their "true" selves. They portrayed themselves with their personal biography, not another with a multitude of given roles. In a sense, they leaped from a masked population of individuals acting on a stage of everyday university life to a wilderness stage encouraging openness, honesty and respect for core-selves. It is, perhaps, a paradox to make use of Goffman's idea of role-playing in wilderness, yet I believe it serves a useful tool.

Wilderness is a unique stage where its "players" are more likely to act themselves than on almost any other stage in life. For it is in wilderness that many of the peripheral layers of self are willingly shed and the core layer of self is most apt to emerge. Like an onion, everyday life society encourages its members to cover their core-selves and present socially desirable images that are usually fabricated by many layers of facades. Jourard (1971) called this phenomenon "marketing personality." Unlike everyday life, group members in wilderness feel more comfortable socially risking and presenting who they really are; they most often shed their pretences and present their core-selves, rather than the camouflaged selves they portray



in everyday life. With excellent role models, wilderness groups have a high potential to support one another, to shed their masks and step away from their every day life acts. The students on the weekend journey found their escape from everyday university life, entailing the social pressure of marketing a feigned personality, an illuminating, refreshing and empowering growth experience. Similarly, Jourard (1971), who discovered that individuals' mental health and openness have a positive linear relationship, believed this mutual sharing of selves to be an extremely healthy process. Therefore, as wilderness encourages openness, and openness begets more openness, under the influence of good role models, wilderness has an incredible potency to teach programme participants to lead happier and healthier lives on the stage of everyday life through the presentation of their core-selves, much as they did on the stage of wilderness.

As the trip began to unfold the students became astounded at how comfortable they felt in their re-negotiated wilderness social world. Released from the social pressures of university life they began to act out roles that felt increasingly natural to them, roles that were also encouraged and supported by their peers in wilderness. These liberating self-roles were far afield from their everyday life selves. The leaders and the group

encouraged one another to step onto a new wilderness social stage and act their core-selves parts accordingly. The meanings of social objects, such as appearance, social status, feelings, social trust, were all re-negotiated. In wilderness, the value of some social objects declined (such as appearance and social status) while others (such as trust and respect) were elevated. For example, for the students to maintain their everyday life appearances and simultaneously meet the physical demands of wilderness, was impossible. No one on the weekend journey could sustain their urban presentation of self, so "fashionable" personal appearance quickly lost its status and was consequently less valued by the group.

At the end of the trip the students stepped from the canoes, off their "wilderness stage" and back onto their stage of university and urban life. Some of the students, anxious to get home, quickly shed their "acts" and distanced themselves from their negotiated meanings of wilderness. Others, however, tried to retain many of their outdoor acts and negotiated meanings to objects. Unfortunately, back in the "concrete jungle," these wilderness acts proved to be difficult to preserve, because the social construction of university life supported few of wilderness' acts and meanings toward objects. For example, after the trip Ron declared, "Lots of things I got out of the trip have

normalized. Time has eroded some of my feelings." I believe, however, that regular exposure to wilderness and quality transfer of objects from wilderness can amplify one's commitment to and meaning of negotiated social acts found in wilderness and thus help participants to better counter social urban pressures through this increased awareness. The key to the maintenance of wilderness social realities is regular access to excellent wilderness group experiences.

#### Wilderness Group's Social Construction of Symbolic Reality

Schutz (1973) pointed out that knowledge involves constructs, such as a set of abstractions or generalizations. Through these constructs individuals interpret facts selected from a universal context by the activities of their minds. It is through these personal interpretations that people attempt to make sense of their everyday world. Individuals, therefore, only grasp portions of the available information, namely those which are most relevant to them and shift their focus of attention depending on what is important to them at the time. For Berger and Luckman, (1966) the reality of one's life is organized around the "here and now"; the immediate focus of one's attention to the present. This here and now, understood through one's biographical situation, is the

realism of one's consciousness. While there are different degrees of consciousness, the most potent is the here and now; the world within reach; the world in which one can act to influence one's reality. The interest in this zone of influence or manipulation is the most intense and is the most meaningful to an individual at that moment. As evidenced through the synthesis of the co-researchers' experiences, wilderness is a potent creator of meaningful moments. Its robust influence focuses participants upon their present reality. The students' investment in focusing on their present reality had a direct consequence for their personal well being, where new awarenesses developed and subsequently nurtured growth. The novelty, "magic" and spiritual beauty of wilderness, the intense interpersonal relations discovered within, and the ideal opportunities for reflection and intrapersonal growth found in wilderness, all worked together to encourage participants to focus on their wilderness life-worlds and place their everyday life realities into the depths of their consciousness.

It is in this way that the outdoor experience distanced participants from their everyday realities. The duration and remoteness of the journey, novelty and strength of interpersonal relations, level of adventure and trusting atmosphere created by the leaders, were all positively related to further accomplish this passage. According to

Berger and Luckmann (1966), this shift in life-worlds may result in a type of transitional shock for participants due to the shift in attentiveness that the transition involves. This shift may be experienced in a number of domains where the meanings of objects differ from their meaning in everyday life. Alternating from one dichotomous life-world to the next (everyday life to wilderness living and back to everyday life) may result in tensions between consciousness where individuals are conscious of living in a world of different realities. In each reality their attention is likely to be focused on different feelings, emotions and values.

During the wilderness journey, physical distance from one reality allowed the other reality, the here and now, to become the predominant reality. The here and now reality forced students to become attentive to that immediate lived reality in the fullest way. However, the more meaningful the distant reality was the more it entered the students' consciousness and subsequently influenced their thinking and actions. For instance, while paddling, living in the here and now wilderness reality, the students were inadvertently reminded of their everyday world through modern-day objects. The meaning of these modern-day objects sometimes created powerful negative emotions among the students. The objects tore them away from their wilderness reality, partially

disrupting their empowering and liberating emotions, such as solitude, trust, respect, freedom and appreciation. For example, Sam recounted, "Cars and bridges felt insulting. As if someone is playing with your mind, mixing things that should not be." Even being verbally reminded of everyday world objects in wilderness disturbed Karen. She expressed, "That really bothered me about how people talked about the bar, about people going home to get beer and I thought 'oh can you not just put it out of your head for just two days, just take advantage of this'?" The students conceptualized and understood the dichotomy of the two worlds. For instance, Sam explained, "Garbage in the city is natural, where in the bush it does not fit; it is out of place." They felt comfortable in either world but felt tension when the realities of both worlds overlapped.

During the wilderness journey the leaders set precedents and encouraged the students to redefine their cultural norms, rules and meaning toward objects. In this way the leaders helped the students to enter a new sphere of reality and ascribe new meaning to objects that were supported by this reality. For example, tolerance of pollution, racism, respect toward elders, inter-social acceptance, modes of transportation, means of garbage disposal, importance of recycling, interpersonal relations, degree of trust, values, personal space needs and level of



self-disclosure all differ across cultures. Tolerance levels and norms of objects are pre-negotiated, have meaning and are accepted by a culture. But objectifications such as these are often re-negotiated and take on new meaning in another culture. As an individual or group crosses from one culture to another, meanings of social objects must be understood and re-negotiated. Crossing cultures forces one to reconsider a culture's rules, norms and meanings it ascribes to objects. What is accepted and taken for granted in one culture does not necessarily interface with another culture. During "cross-cultural" travel, from urban to "wilderness society," the adaptations to an altered reality are more easily attained for some people than for others. These re-negotiated meanings of objects in a wilderness milieu are usually novel and initially uncomfortable for the majority of participants. However, if they are receptive and open to the process, the transition will eventually lead to personal empowerment and growth.



Time

It is fascinating to note the temporal fluctuations of the students' emotional realities and how the meanings of these realities changed during their journey. On Friday afternoon, physically distant from school, they began to cast aside their everyday school life-world. Over a short period of time they became more confident in their outdoor physical and social skills and began to negotiate a new wilderness social reality. The more exposure they had to one another and to their new environment the more willingly they re-negotiated new meanings toward objects. For example, Ron explained, "At first I was really nervous about the first sharing circle; I didn't want to do it. After ... it wasn't that bad." This feeling was prevalent among the co-researchers as openness encouraged more openness. As Ghandi said, "Love begets love"; the leaders pointed the way towards negotiating new meanings toward objects and the students followed.

Positive intra- and interpersonal feelings in the re-negotiated social context grew steadily until Sunday morning. Then, as if plucked from a "fantasy world," the meaning of their everyday university life began to pervade their here and now wilderness life-world. For instance, many students woke Sunday morning worrying about their

school life, (including yet to be done assignments due Monday), they had so recently left behind. The social reality of school life and the responsibilities of academia swept into peoples' consciousness and became more meaningful to them as they became temporally closer to them.

Predictably, it strongly influenced their thinking and actions. Ron reflected, "Sunday morning I wanted to start canoeing right away so we could get home early." For others it took the wind on Sunday to entice them back to their everyday world. After the wind on Sunday afternoon, for example, Doug recalled, "People were getting tired and frustrated, everybody knew how much work they had to do when they got back." As time passed on Sunday and the wind increased in intensity the students' hierarchy of worlds began to surface. The importance of their everyday school life began to grow and overshadow their weekend wilderness reality. For them school life was their "real" reality; it was this world that was most important to them. For them, life in the natural world was artificial; it was a "make believe world" that held little status. Like a powerful movie, their canoe journey was an escape from their scheduled university life-world; but their wilderness life-world had to be left behind for their "real-world" of academia and responsibility. However, with the help of the skilled leaders, lessons, beliefs, emotions and relations from their wilderness journey were transferred back to their

real world, and, according to their individual receptivity and reflective skills, subsequently influenced their everyday lives.

To the students' surprise, as Sunday drew to a close, the lure for their everyday life world oscillated in meaning and filled many students with conflicting emotions. Nancy, for example recounted, "As we rounded the last bend and saw the bridge ahead I had a mixture of feelings. It felt good to almost be there ... but also a bit saddened by the fact that the trip was almost over and would never take place again." The most appreciative students of the wilderness reality tried to resist the temptation from peers and objects of everyday life to transfer their objectifications and emotions in wilderness back to everyday life. Sam, for example, was most definitive in his feelings. He stated, "I wasn't ready to go home ... I wanted to stay longer ... I knew as soon as I got home I would be going back into the same old routine all over again."

When the group reached the take-out spot they all stepped from the waning wilderness social world to that of everyday urban life. At this point many students joyfully made an emotional leap in to everyday life, but others tried to hang on the powerfully emotional social reality of their wilderness journey; they fought the passage of time

inevitably depleting these feelings. Back in the urban environment of distracters and everyday life values, objects and social language, the social reality of the wilderness journey began to break up and disintegrate as well.

Fortunately, the social renegotiation of objects that had taken place over the weekend created new group understandings and feelings of cohesiveness. This closeness permitted the wilderness group to re-enter everyday life much stronger and more united than they were before they had left. This feeling of group solidarity and new intra- and interpersonal awarenesses sowed the seeds for the group to continue to grow more fully than what would normally have been possible for them without their wilderness experience.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS PERSONAL GROWTH MODEL

The Model's Journey Begins

A great deal of research has investigated the effects of wilderness programmes; however, the majority of this research measures programme outcomes, provides little understanding of what actually goes on inside wilderness programmes and contributes few recommendations toward the advancement of programme methodology. In fact, to date, according to Kolb (1991), relatively little is known about how and why wilderness programmes work. Furthermore, little theory exists to guide research and programme design (Hendee & Brown, 1987). In an attempt to bridge this gap and help explain and understand human experience in wilderness, I propose the following Wilderness Personal Growth Model. The Wilderness Personal Growth Model has slowly evolved in my mind for over a decade. My upbringing, biography, education, beliefs, teaching background and the leading of many wilderness experiences have all influenced its design. Prior to this study a structure of the model existed, but it was far from complete. Thus, throughout my research the model and my study grew as one, each influencing the other. Hence, the Wilderness Personal Growth Model synthesizes previous research as well as my extensive experience in the

teaching of outdoor education and is an expression of my personal philosophy for nurturing maximal intra- and interpersonal growth during wilderness weekend trips.

Through the Wilderness Personal Growth Model's development I have come to believe, as does Bacon (1983, p.94), that,

When people and wilderness are brought together, there arises a true potential for a profound and compelling experience. The humans offer consciousness, recognition and worship to the natural world. In response, it [wilderness] displays symbols and provides challenges urging humans toward their highest potential.

Practitioners, however, should not fall into the trap of relying on the intrinsically educative qualities of wilderness (Miles, 1987). Such faith tempts potential outdoor educators to abdicate their teaching responsibilities once their students are placed in an outdoor environment.

The Wilderness Personal Growth Model is a humanistic model designed to assist practitioners, working in a wide variety of educational, social and environmental milieus, to help their students attain maximal intra- and interpersonal growth through a greater awareness and understanding of



their selves, others and the environment during short-term wilderness programmes accommodating large numbers of students. The Wilderness Personal Growth Model is not designed to enhance all group experiences in wilderness. It should, therefore, not be employed without adaptation to group experiences of more than three days. While the natural educative values of wilderness cannot be denied, it is theorized that through the use of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, learning outcomes and growth gained during and after wilderness programmes can be amplified.

In its true sense, wilderness is "an area where the earth and its community of life are un-trampled by man [and woman], where man himself [and woman herself] is a visitor who does not remain" (1964, The Wilderness Act). For the purposes of this model, a wilderness environment is considered to be a surrounding where modern conveniences are not available; where individuals are less able to exercise control over their living environment than in everyday life and must rely on resources at hand for their comfort and ultimate survival. The predictability of a wilderness experience is reduced by this lack of control over the environment--a novelty for the majority of today's novice wilderness users. Faced with more unknowns than found in everyday life, a level of uncertainty is always present for all who live in wilderness (Miles, 1990). It is this loss



of control, unpredictability and freedom to choose that forms an integral component of outdoor education.

Growth is the increase in some quality or property. Wilderness holds a magical-like potential to nurture this process of growth and development, especially for those who are attuned, aware and open to the processes of change; for through awareness one learns, grows and changes. Katz (1973) explained that,

There are moments when we become more aware of our own nature and the nature of the universe. During these moments we are more able to choose freely and to act intentionally. Personal growth evolves when these moments begin to cumulate and intensify. Therefore growth deals with the quality and direction of one's life.

Wilderness offers a profusion of these "moments", that when captured and meaningfully processed can certainly alter the quality and direction of one's life. The Wilderness Personal Growth Model is conceptualized to maximize these opportunities.

Figure 1 provides a schematic representation of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model. The elements of the model (adventure, leadership, referent other students, self, reflection, reality transition, awareness, and personal

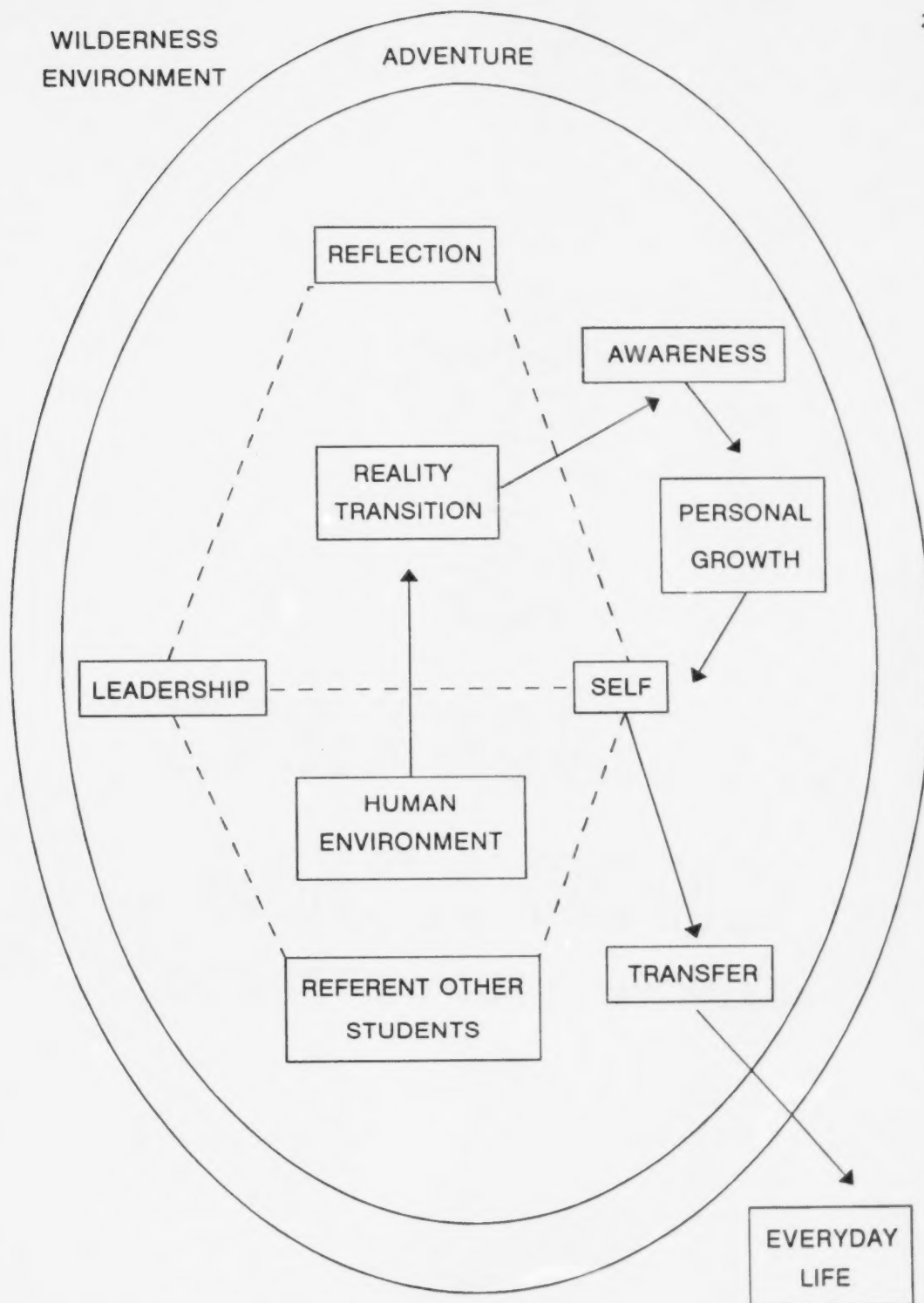


Figure 1. Wilderness Personal Growth Model

growth) all take place within the surrounding wilderness environment and are under its constant influence. The interactions between the self, referent other students, leaders, reflection and the level of adventure within a group in wilderness result in the transition of its participants' from one reality to another. The methodological use of reflection upon students' patterns of behaviour, values, beliefs and motivations through the resultant experience can lead to a greater awareness of self, others and the environment. This increase in awareness heightens personal growth and in turn empowers alterations to self. This cyclic model facilitates these changes in self to further alter the meaning of the wilderness experience for self and others, and provide for a more fulfilling and meaningful life outside that of wilderness. Table 12 presents the components of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model in further detail.

Table 12

Components of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model

## Wilderness Environment

## Level of Adventure

- |      |                 |                |
|------|-----------------|----------------|
| Self | - Physical self |                |
|      | - Social self   | - Self-concept |
|      |                 | - Receptivity  |

## Referent Other Students

- |            |                                                 |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership | - Technical and interpersonal leadership skills |
|            | - Mutuality Model                               |
|            | - Modelling                                     |

- |            |                          |
|------------|--------------------------|
| Reflection | - Self-disclosure        |
|            | - Fears and expectations |
|            | - Objective setting      |
|            | - Solo                   |
|            | - Metaphor               |

## Reality Transition

- |           |                                                   |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Awareness | - Awareness, respect and love for self            |
|           | - Awareness, respect and love for others          |
|           | - Awareness, respect and love for the environment |

## Personal Growth

## Transfer of Growth

As evidenced in the multi-method study, quality weekend wilderness programmes can provide inordinately meaningful learning and growth experiences. These weekends can nurture participants' sense of wonder and promote feelings of humility. With the ability to sweep urban dwellers into a new and seemingly timelessness reality, wilderness often inspires its travellers to slow, to listen, to reflect, to hear their thoughts and become more contemplative than in everyday life. Furthermore, wilderness presents wholistic challenges to its guests, and thereby contributes to their cognitive, affective, spiritual, social and physical growth. Conversely, Miles (1987) points out that conventional schooling focuses primarily on intellectual growth and infrequently touches on the physical aspects of education. Furthermore, modern education places little value on, and pays virtually no attention to, the emotional and spiritual aspects of being. In this narrow scope, modern education seems to concentrate primarily on the domains that can be objectively evaluated and ignores the more potent, wholistic, subjective domains. Wilderness education, however, is naturally more conducive than classroom learning to emphasizing these less understood, but no less important, inspiring elements of humanness. The Wilderness Personal Growth Model emphasizes learning and growing through social, emotional and spiritual domains.

### Wilderness Environment

Removed from the conveniences of everyday life, wilderness holds a multitude of cognitive, physical, emotional, spiritual and social challenges for its travellers. Even on small excursions into wilderness, it is prudent for participants to be physically and psychologically prepared for the widest range of environmental conditions. For example, conditions that may pose a threat to participants may include weather variations of wind, rain, sun, snow, and temperature fluctuations and terrain, such as mountains, cliffs, flat-lands, rivers, lakes and swamps. All activities that take place in wilderness are vulnerable to the interactions between weather and terrain. The uncertain dynamics of the wilderness environment constantly affects the level of adventure and can vary the inherent risks of an outdoor programme with little warning, and, consequently alter the level of adventure. Therefore, as environmental conditions change with time, a wilderness programme's content must remain flexible to adapt accordingly.

The wilderness environment influences wide-spread changes to the kinds of interactions experienced between the level of adventure, the leaders, the participants and the quality and potency of the students' reflections upon their

experience. Thus the environment has the all encompassing power to rapidly and directly affect all elements of a wilderness journey, and thus the elements of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model. Therefore, wilderness environment is placed on the periphery of the model so that it may encircle all other Wilderness Personal Growth Model components.

Before the environment can influence the core components of a wilderness programme, however, it must first interact with the adventure level of the programme.

#### Level of Adventure

According to Duffy's Inverted-U Hypothesis (Figure 2) a moderate level of arousal will result in optimal performance for most activities (Oxendine, 1974). However, once this level of arousal passes an optimal level, specific for each individual in varying circumstances, a participant's high level of emotional stress (possibly progressing into a state of fear), leads to a lower level of performance, gratification and growth. In wilderness many opportunities for heightened cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual and physical arousal abound, thus offering countless chances for optimal growth. Building on Duffy's Inverted-U Hypothesis, Solomon's (1980) Opponent Process Theory (Figure 3) hypothesized that all emotions brought about by a novel, unconditioned stimulus (state A) are almost identical in



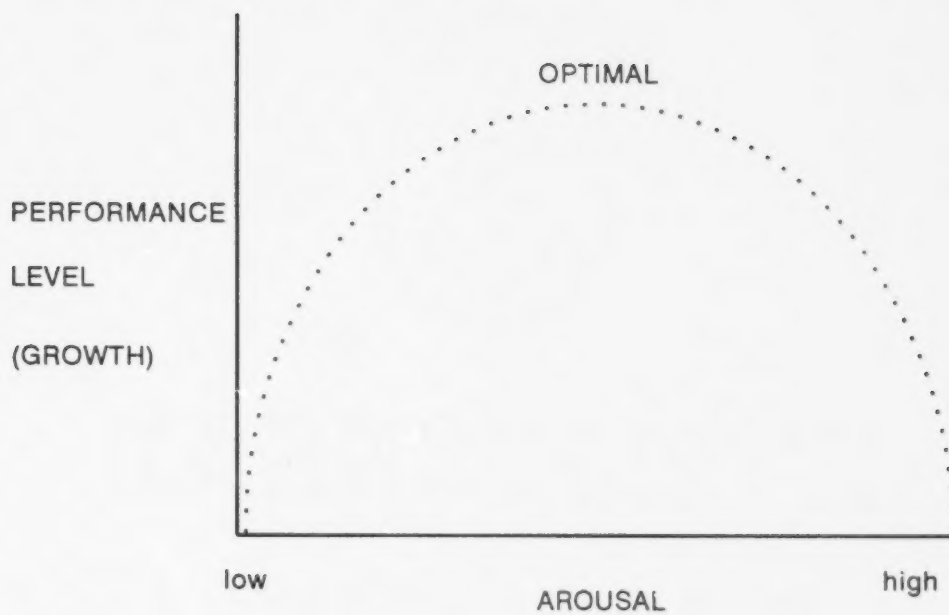


Figure 2. Duffy's Inverted "U" Hypothesis

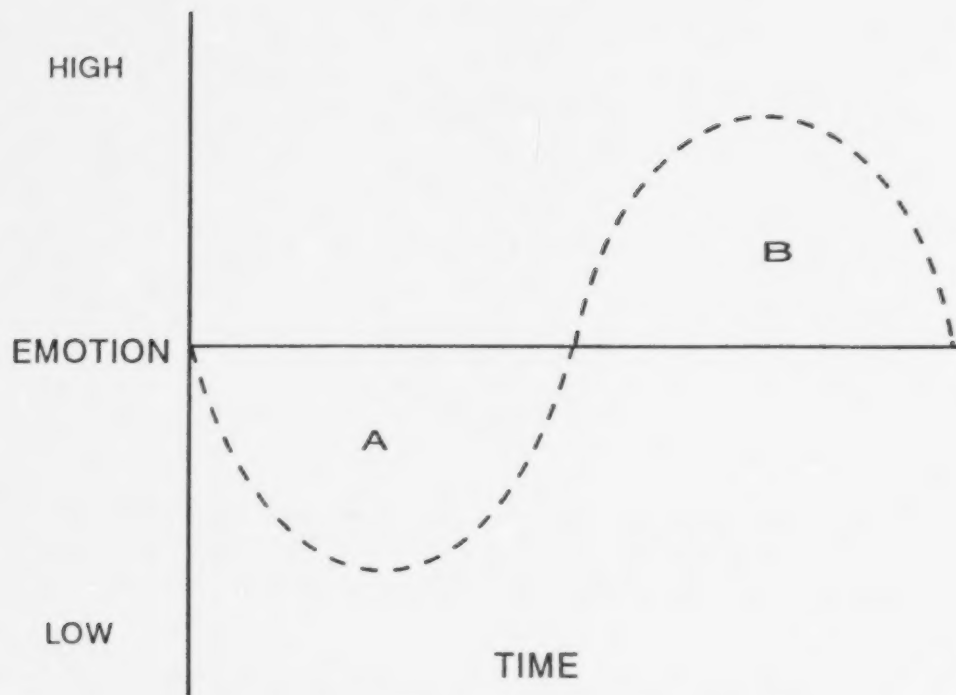


Figure 3. Solomon's Opponent Process Theory

magnitude to the stimulus intensity (state B), quality and duration of the reinforcer. For example, the greater the novelty and perceived danger associated with a risk activity, the greater the consequent level of arousal. The higher the level of arousal (within optimal levels), the greater the euphoric emotions, self-awareness and, hence, personal growth derived from the experience. For example, during the canoeists' epic paddling experience into the wind, most students experienced negative emotions such as apprehension and frustration (State A). They knew only too well that one miscalculation may send them and their gear into the cold current. Once safely on the river bank they began to display positive feelings of elation, such as smiling and hugging (State B); however, in order to experience this sense of joy and relief (State B) they first had to experience some levels of negative emotion (State A). Hence, the more novel and meaningful the risk activity or negative stimulus, (within reason), the higher the level of arousal and subsequent positive effect emotions.

According to Zuckerman's (1979) theory of sensation seeking, constant differences exist among individuals in their optimal levels of stimulation and arousal levels. Individuals who have an inherent desire to experience extreme levels of arousal attain optimal performance and psychological needs under novel and stressful conditions.

Conversely, individuals with low sensation seeking levels prefer lower levels of arousal to attain their optimal performances and growth. Combining the three theories of Duffy, Solomon and Zuckerman, one may assume that: optimal performance, learning and growth take place within a certain level of arousal; individuals vary in their personal levels of optimal arousal; and, the higher the level of arousal (within personal limits), the higher the resultant affective emotions and growth.

Supported by the aforementioned theorists, Mortlock (1978) developed the Four Stages of Adventure Model (recreation, adventure, frontier adventure and misadventure). These stages of adventure can be equated to stages or levels of arousal. In stage one, "recreation", the engaged activity is far below the abilities' of the participants and is therefore accompanied by a low level of arousal. It is thus perceived by the participants as boring or a waste of time. The second stage, "adventure", is present when, during a state of moderate arousal, participants feel in control of their situation by using their skills to achieve a given task. Fear of harm is absent because the participants believe they are in control. In stage three, "frontier adventure", individuals perceive themselves to be in a state of physical risk, and are therefore in a state of considerable physical and

psychological stress; a situation of high arousal. They no longer feel in complete control of the situation; however, they believe that with a great deal of effort and luck they can achieve their goals without injury. The perception of being in great danger at this stage is real; however, through prior programme training and safety practices, the actual risk of physical harm in an educational setting should be negligible. Rock climbing with safety ropes fixed to the top of the precipice is a good example of participants' perception of the risk to be high when in fact it is low. This knife edge state of dissonance promotes elation and other positive affective emotions when correlated with success. As previously theorized by Solomon (1980), the "degree of satisfaction and pride is proportional to the scale and intensity of the adventure" (Mortlock, 1978). This stage, referred to as the growing edge, is potentially the most valid for educational purposes. The fourth stage of Mortlock's (1978) adventure model, "misadventure", may be present when the challenge is beyond the control of the participant. In this stage the participant's psychomotor skills and optimal level of arousal are insufficient for safe participation in the activity. Here the individual may experience emotions of panic and terror and may in fact become injured. This stage of adventure is totally unacceptable to meet the goals of an educational institution.

Therefore, according to the aforementioned theories, in order to achieve maximal growth in a wilderness environment, the perceived risk of an individual should be optimal; high enough to create arousal but never too great to exceed individual thresholds. As outlined by Gibson (1977), the critical aspect of adventure education is to ensure students' success without eliminating the challenge. Rock climbing, white water canoeing or mountaineering are obvious methods of providing optimal levels of stimulation for participants. The level of arousal in a wilderness programme may also be enhanced by conducting novel group experiences, such as night hiking, setting up camp in the dark, fording a cold river or by simply camping without tents. Group oriented activities such as these provide support to group members seeking adventure in addition to encouraging cooperation, trust, respect and ultimately personal growth.

To this point the adventure component of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model has focused on the physical and emotional aspects of adventure; however, it is crucial to recognize the potency of the socio-cultural domain during and after the experience. While not as obvious as the physical aspect, it has become clear throughout this study that the social risks of a wilderness programme can be just as powerful. The social risks and subsequent growth during

a wilderness experience are usually unexpected by participants and are generally misunderstood by leaders. It is plausible that over time the exercise of re-negotiating a social reality for groups in wilderness may be more meaningful than the physical aspects. In fact, the social elements of a trip can, in part, reduce the emphasis of physical risk in the attainment of optimal arousal during a wilderness journey. It is important to recognize that social risks during a wilderness programme may be manipulated by trip leaders in much the same way as some of the physical challenges. As demonstrated by this study, methodologies of consciously altering the level of social risk may include cooperative games, sharing circles and appropriate levels of encouraged self-disclosure.

It is, therefore, of primary concern that leaders are aware, perceptive and sensitive to the varying social states of dissonance, presentation of symbols and subsequent negotiations that take place during a wilderness journey. While the social risk elements may be similar to the physical risk elements in terms of arousal, they are more subtle, less likely to be recognized and more difficult to discuss, reflect upon and transfer to everyday life. It is evident that a great deal of learning and growth may result from optimal levels of social risk; however, the same theoretical principles as the physical domain need apply.



All individuals have personal optimal levels of social risk; and, these levels must be respected at all times. Should students be pushed too far beyond their optimal social comfort zone, much damage and negative learning may result. This important phenomenon is not clearly understood by most outdoor leaders, and, to date, not recognized by outdoor theory. Consequently, this critical domain of social risk will be dealt with further in the Wilderness Personal Growth Model.

The triad of self, leader and referent other students compose the critical social domain of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model. This domain, the human environment, will be addressed in the following the three sections.

### Self

Students whose basic needs have been met will reach out, risk and grow on their journey towards self-actualization. According to Maslow's (1968) theory of motivation, there are five basic classes of needs. These needs are hierarchically organized as follows: physiological (food and water), safety and security (avoidance of pain, fear and dangers), love and belong (intimacy, identification), self-esteem needs for self-respect (achievement, appreciation and attention) and self-

actualization needs to realize one's full potential (create and learn). A fundamental aspect of any outdoor programme is the assurance of the students' basic needs, primarily those of physical, psychological and social safety. Hence, the Wilderness Personal Growth Model presents two levels of self--the physical self and the social self.

#### Physical self.

Wilderness journeys are often rugged and taxing experiences that frequently sustain lower levels of basic human needs that are usually taken for granted in everyday life. For example, food, water, safety, shelter and security are often less easily attained in wilderness than in everyday life; a fact that usually adds to a trip's level of adventure and subsequent post-trip feelings of positive effect emotions. As previously discussed, this is acceptable and even desirable as long as its delicate balance remains in Mortlock's (1978) frontier adventure level and does not tip into misadventure, where levels of arousal become way beyond participants' optimal level of stimulation.

The assimilation of basic skills is necessary to safely and successfully partake in any wilderness programme. Prior to commencement the trip leader must identify what skills and levels of self-sufficiency are necessary for students to

partake in a particular journey. These skills should be both technical and fitness related. Furthermore, it is important that the training for both of these areas be progressive and aimed at self-reliance (Mortlock, 1978). A sufficient level of physical skill to meet the demands of a wilderness journey will provide a solid foundation from which the social self may grow.

#### Social self.

People require a reasonably secure environment in which to trust, risk, learn, grow and love. This foundation provides a base from which individuals view themselves as worthy. According to Glasser (1965), potential growth through an experience may be enhanced if participants feel the need to love and be loved and believe that they are worthwhile to themselves and to others. These essential positive feelings of self are vital in order to successfully encourage students to ascend Maslow's needs hierarchy and attain self-actualization. Only through this stage can students lead a rich and deeply meaningful life. Only through this stage will students spread their wings, risk and be receptive to growth; this is a most critical element of education. With empathic and informed leadership, outdoor education provides an excellent medium through which students can realize their potential to self-actualize. The social self of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model is

composed of self-concept and receptivity.

#### Self-Concept:

Individuals' self-concept is the total image that they hold of themselves (Adler et al., 1980). This image may be formulated through self-evaluation with and feedback from referent others. The ways in which individuals perceive themselves will also be greatly influenced by their surroundings, situation and the frequency and intensity of their experiences (Ewert, 1983a). Through the potency of a wilderness experience, including the intense social experience and the often harsh environmental feedback available through reality confrontation, individuals' self-concept level may be positively or negatively altered. Participants' perceptions of themselves is thought to be a central factor in influencing their behaviour and is thus positively related to the individual benefits derived from an outdoor programme. Therefore, providing the necessary content, processes, elements and levels of adventure to ensure the enhancement of self is a crucial factor of any outdoor education programme.

#### Receptivity:

The amount of personal growth derived from a wilderness experience is highly dependent upon the participants' receptivity towards the programme and their desire to

change. Hendee and Brown (1987) stated that, "receptivity or readiness for change may depend on conditions preceding the experience that affect one's motivation to grow or change and on one's stage in life." Individuals, for example, who are deficient in their needs or who are actively pursuing self-improvement will likely be more receptive to change than those who are not. Similarly, people who are experiencing emotional trauma, such as the loss of a loved one or separation from a close friend, are good contenders for personal growth.

While unreceptive participants are less prone to experience personal growth, it is highly unlikely that participants will remain static towards receptivity throughout the wilderness experience. Even the most prejudiced individual usually becomes more open to change and growth as the wilderness experience progresses. Receptivity may be measured by determining the extent to which the participants desire the wilderness experience. Their expectations and willingness and openness to change can provide a gauge for receptivity. As well, people who volunteer to take part in a wilderness journey are likely to be more open to change than individuals who are compelled to participate through peer pressure, required academic credit or court referral. This study determined that the majority of students did not wish to partake in their weekend canoe

journey due to academic and outside responsibilities, and fear of the physical and social unknowns. Furthermore, they had little understanding of the possible intra- and interpersonal benefits that may be derived from such an event. However, while reluctant to participate, they were, by and large, pursuing self-improvement through academic work and were receptive to the growth components of the journey.

In order to maximize the amount of personal growth that takes place before, during and after a wilderness trip, it is therefore imperative for participants to become as receptive as possible toward personal change and growth. Growth can only begin through awareness; awareness can best be fostered through reflection. Therefore, the process of reflection forms an integral portion of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model and will be discussed shortly.

As discussed, one's self is always subject to change through self evaluation and reflection, as well as through social contact with peers. The referent other students are a vital component of a wilderness group experience and, hence, form the second part of the human environment triad.

### Referent Other Students

Referent other students are peers who have been selected by other members of the group as people with whom they identify and with whom they desire to emulate (Gibson, 1977). The perceived evaluation and interpretation of the "self" through the "referent other student" is an important component of a wilderness experience because it is the gauge through which the self's self-concept is measured. In wilderness, as in most other milieu, individuals unconsciously and consciously evaluate themselves through comparisons with others. For example, the way in which peers complete specific tasks in contrast to others, in addition to the implicit and explicit feedback that result from referent others. This peer relationship is key in formulating individuals' perceptions of themselves and thus the formation of their self-concept (Gibson, 1977). Social relations through the mutual interactions to objects and subsequent negotiation of their meaning with referent other students is a critical aspect of a wilderness experience. This social interaction provides a basis through which a measure of self is ultimately determined.



## Leadership

The last element of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model's human environment triad is leadership. To lead a group is to influence its members (Priest, 1990). The competencies necessary for outdoor leaders to influence their students effectively to grow in an environment conducive to learning are diverse. Therefore, highly technically and interpersonally skilled outdoor leaders are essential for the effective growth of participants of a wilderness programme. The leadership component of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model provides practitioners with tools to guide the negotiation of a social reality during the wilderness experience. This section contains three key areas for consideration: technical and interpersonal leadership skills, the mutuality model, and modelling.

### Technical / interpersonal leadership skills.

Traditionally, due to the inherent dangers of adventure activities and the environment, outdoor leaders were evaluated solely on their technical or 'hard' skills. Furthermore, until recently, the affective side of leadership, the human or 'soft' skills, were often ignored (Phipps, 1988). However, as argued by Phipps and Swiderski (1990), it is no longer acceptable for outdoor leaders to be solely competent in technical skills. Presently, with

greater recognition and appreciation of the affective domains, the pendulum is swinging away from the hard skills to strike a preferable balance with that of the soft, interpersonal domain.

According to Miles (1990), one of the earliest formal attempts to instruct soft skills to outdoor leaders was done by Petzoldt of the National Outdoor Leadership School. Gibson (1991), of Augustana University, Alberta, was another outdoor soft-skilled pioneer to emphasize group processing during wilderness journeys. However, due to the complexity and subjective nature of interpersonal skills, the majority of outdoor instructors found the affective domain difficult to teach. Subsequently, while recognized as important, interpersonal skills have often been addressed in a haphazard manner; however, in recognizing the importance of this domain, adventure education organizations have begun to address this deficiency. For example, Outward Bound has recently begun to focus its attention toward human skills competencies, as is evident through its more recent staff training manuals and publications. Additionally, Project Adventure Inc.'s therapeutic Adventure Based Counselling Model of the late 1970's was founded on the philosophy of combining outdoor education, experimental learning and group counselling techniques (Schoel et al., 1988). In a bold leap away from highlighting the physical adventure domain,

the Adventure Based Counselling (ABC) programme was founded on the philosophy of building the affective domain over and above the physical adventure elements of their programmes, thus providing a base from which the affective domain could become meaningful and be nurtured to grow effectively.

It is beyond the scope of this model to discuss the details of outdoor leadership; however, the Wilderness Personal Growth Model does advocate a balance between hard (technical) and soft (interpersonal) skills. The importance of interpersonal skills to nurture personal growth will become self evident in the coming pages.

#### Mutuality Model.

The Mutuality Model is a Do-Look-Learn model. Conventional teaching has used the reciprocal Learn-Look-Do Model, a useful method in the advancement of the physical sciences. However, applied in the human domain it separates and isolates humans from one another. The Learn-Look-Do Model assumes that human experience and learning are understood solely from an external point of view. The goal of this philosophy does not seem to be learning and understanding but knowledge accumulation, or, to become informed (Koziey, 1987). Conversely, the Mutuality Model stresses the importance of "recognizing personal responsibility for participating in the creation of one's

own reality" (Koziey, 1987). Personal awareness of how one influences present reality is the key element of this perspective. Personal responsibility and accountability for one's decisions and actions is a real and desirable goal in the process of learning (Powell, 1989). Personal responsibility, according to Glasser (1965, p.xv), is the ability "to fulfill one's needs in a way that does not deprive others of the ability to fulfill their needs." For example, personal and group safety must be an integral component of each and every decision and activity that takes place during a wilderness experience. Students must be made aware of the implications of their actions for themselves and others. Participants must agree as a group to think before acting, not only of their personal safety, but of that of the group and environment as well. Prior to individual acts, participants must therefore take responsibility to evaluate how their actions may increase the risk to themselves and to the group. Here, outdoor education does not want to produce followers; its purpose is to encourage thinking, reflection, awareness and self-responsibility.

A philosophy of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model is this process of learning through self-guided discovery, as was encouraged by Rogers (1958, as cited by Koziey, 1987). "The only kind of learning which significantly influences

behaviour is self-discovery of self-appropriated learning--truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience." The Mutuality Model's overall goal is to use this philosophy to facilitate individual growth through activities designed to enhance self-knowing. It is, as seen by Koziey (1987), "the education of oneself in the process of being oneself."

The key implementation of this model in wilderness is leaders' restraint from interference with students' experiences, assuming that safety is not at stake, and the provision for an environment of trust necessary for exploration. Instructors of wilderness trips must give students space and encourage them to make individual choices using their unique biography of experiences in context with a given situation. It is here that core-selves will emerge and grow as opposed to nurturing role-directed others. In fact, unnecessary assistance to students, so often accomplished by well meaning instructors, suggests the students' incompetence (Koziey, 1987). Van Manen (1991) suggested this to be a tactful teaching methodology, where the leader steps back whenever possible but remains available when things turn problematic.

By stepping back the adult creates the space wherein the young person is enabled to make decisions and act on things in his or her own way. However, there is a

difference in tactfully stepping back and stepping out altogether, and thus simply leaving a child to his or her own devices.... A child should be allowed to make mistakes and learn from mistakes. But is false tactfulness to step out of the pedagogical relation altogether and leave the child "free" to make decisions and choices for which he or she may not be quite ready yet (Van Manen, 1991, p.156).

It is therefore necessary for the leader to show respect for students and demonstrate confidence in them by encouraging maximum personal freedom. This trust enhances the students' level of self-responsibility and ultimately the student-teacher relationships. For example, the National Outdoor Leadership School's (NOLS) adult programme is based on learning by doing. Judgement is enhanced by making one's own decisions, assuming responsibility and being aware of the effects those decisions have on oneself, others and on the natural world. The environment, not the leader, provides feedback on the basis of decisions made. Errors in judgement often result in an uncomfortable reality accompanied by valuable lessons. These lessons are empowering and important, as they are real, not contrived, and are learned through experience (Ratz & Easley, 1987). Gibson (1991) coined this phenomenon "reality confrontation", learning what has meaning and consequences for the here and now. The meaning of this learning involves



the action and investment of the total self.

Learning by doing provides ownership and self-responsibility to students' decisions as well as fostering independence and pride. "It is through exposing learners to those subjective processes which manufacture their reality that the possibility of growth and transformation is enhanced" (Koziey, 1987). A fundamental component of this theory, therefore, is to step back (within reason) and allow nature to become the teacher (Gibson, 1991).

#### Modelling.

Good role-modelling may be accomplished by leaders, through specific verbal and non-verbal actions, through the transmission of desired behaviours and values to students. These overt and covert actions of leaders are often emulated by students and consequently lead to the participants' development of new behaviours. Modelling provides students with new cognitive perspectives, which when rehearsed, lead to the assimilation of appropriate behaviour (Ewert, 1989). This gentle, but influential process, provides educators with unique opportunities to guide the values, attitudes and practices of participants (Raiola, 1988) and to have a profound effect on the students' acquisition of technical, social and self-skills.



It is critical that a delicate balance be attained between modelling desired behaviours and values to students while simultaneously allowing them to learn through their own experiences, as advocated in the Mutuality Model. The Wilderness Personal Growth Model, therefore, suggests that leaders present excellent, meaningful role models to students while simultaneously gently guiding them to discover their own experiences. The ultimate goal of modelling is for students to be well led through a positive growth experience with the belief that they, in fact, led themselves. For as the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu stated, "A leader is best when people barely know he [she] exists ... so that when his [her] work is done, his [her] aim fulfilled, the people will say, 'we did this ourselves'." This goal, once attained, will without doubt provide substantial empowerment and positive affect feelings to nurture growth among group members.

### Reflection

The component of reflection is a key element in the Wilderness Personal Growth Model to inspire students to construct meaning from their wilderness journeys. Reflection is the mental reproduction of physical, social and inner experiences. The word itself means "bending back". The thinking or mental bending back of time involves

scanning the memory of the past, seeking connectedness, discrepancies and meanings (Horwood, 1989). It encourages individuals to enter into a dialectic process between self and other where they can interpret, objectify and construct further meaning from experiences. Reflection can help individuals to become more aware of how they construct or interpret reality and can give them greater control over and insights into how they objectify their social reality. Furthermore, this cognitive reconstruction provides a mental image and interpretation of experiences where it may be processed, evaluated, discarded and/or cherished. Often this exercise helps people to acquire new meanings to experiences or symbols over time, especially if they can be re-framed metaphorically to enhance understanding and meaning.

Schutz (1967) defined reflection as the looking back upon earlier experiences or, pre-reflexively, projecting oneself from the present to the future. He argued that this reflective process is a search for meaning from social experiences and that social experiences must be defined as meaningful experiences. Meaning is created when the stream of human experience, the ground of all experience, is broken by reflection. Furthermore, he defined meaning in terms of highly conscious, reflective experience. The primary goal

of reflection, therefore, is to construct further meaning from experience.

Teaching through reflection should then form a critical element of education. According to Knapp (1992) the Latin meaning of the word 'educator' means 'to lead out' and 'draw forth' knowledge from a student. I believe that the essence of education is to help students construct meaning from their experiences. It is during acts of reflection that this process of education may be most effectively accomplished. The purpose of reflective sessions, therefore, "is to channel and focus the meanings that students inevitably try to derive from experiences. Reflective sessions, then, mediate experience in order to help students make meaning" (Knapp, 1992, p.25). One reason that superficial knowledge is so common in modern schools may be that students encounter a sparsity of meaningful experiences. The instruction found in these institutions seldom involves direct, meaningful experiences with a balance of cognitive and affective reflection that meaningful and enduring learning requires. Education through wilderness had the potential to provide a profusion of meaningful learning experiences.

Unfortunately, reflection in Western society is often difficult for many people. Our everyday lives seldom

encourage us to slow down and invite contemplation. Relaxation in our daily routine is too often sought through passive entertainment; the television is an excellent example of a convenient time filler that poses as a temporary escape from everyday life. In fact, in the average American home, television sets are on for 368 minutes a day (Edginton, Compton & Hanson, 1989). This phenomenon is a common example of individuals choosing the line of least resistance to fill their leisure time. Hence, much of our nation's human resources are lost through passive, non-fulfilling, stagnating pursuits; this national phenomenon provides little opportunity for desired personal growth.

Our reliance on modern technology is shifting our societal focus from physically active, social reflective beings to a society requiring a tremendous amount of external, passive stimulation and convenience. This 'spectator' society is losing its social and communication skills with others as well as with the self. The potency of education through wilderness is its severance from modern convenience; a distancing from everyday life. Dislodged from these powerful distracters, students in wilderness are presented with an incredible opportunity through reflection to discover more about themselves and others, as well as the rhythms of nature. Unfortunately, without prior experience

of outdoor living, many people fail to grasp this paramount educational opportunity and value it solely for its physical challenges. Outdoor educators should not waste wilderness' dynamic form of wholistic education.

Katz (1973) found that physical experiences, such as the arduous physical elements of an outdoor journey, are much easier to talk about, interpret and objectify than the subjective experiences. Ironically the greatest potential for personal growth lies in the affective domain; "the subtle quality of the experience and the glimmerings of self-understanding" (Katz, 1973). Horwood (1989) emphasized that reflection should include emotions. While perhaps difficult to talk about, these shades of greater understanding can lead to substantial personal growth. Horwood believed that educators cheat their students when reflection is confined to cognitive levels. Reflection must emphasize both cognitive and affective domains, as it can refine both knowledge and feelings. Unfortunately, few educators possess the skill to help their students capture and grow from many of their subjective experiences that can be greatly enhanced through programmed reflection.

In these instances the majority of wilderness experiences, led through the philosophy of allowing the mountains to speak for themselves, are enjoyable,

stimulating and provide a source for new friendships. However, without processing the experience's transferable meaning through reflection, the wilderness journey lacks its empowering substantive effects (Stremba, 1989).

Stremba (1989) emphasized the importance of processing the experience before, during and after a personal journey. Thinking about and discussing feelings, relationships and the accomplishments of one's self and the group enriches, deepens and broadens the wilderness experience. It enhances the awareness of the experience and facilitates its transformation into everyday life. Processing the journey with the assistance of metaphor also provides students with the necessary transfer tools to practice their newly acquired skills and insights at home, long after they have left the mystique of the bush. For instance, adventure activities frequently reveal an individual's hidden potential, such as the willingness to take risks. This self-awareness of one's potential will undoubtedly be useful in one's daily life. However, if left unprocessed, this valuable characteristic may go unnoticed, and subsequently a valuable teachable moment may be lost. Similarly, the value of reflection can increase one's awareness of other people's needs and identify how caring individuals can help others to meet their deficiencies. These effective periods of reflection may be programmed through encouraging appropriate

self-disclosure, providing solo time away from distractive others, journal writing, group debriefings, group closures, and sharing circles.

The critical reflective element of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model is, therefore, separated into four parts: self-disclosure, solo, metaphor and objective setting. Perhaps the most fundamental element that assists in the process of reflection and building bridges to other growth processes is encouraged appropriate self-disclosure.

#### Self-disclosure.

Revealing portions of one's true self to others through personal thoughts and feelings can enlighten one's self and draw individuals closer together through mutual trust and respect. Trust, however, as defined by Bunting (1991), is a fragile commodity. It takes time to build but can be destroyed in the twinkling of an eye; yet, it is the glue that holds all meaningful relationships together and is the essential nutrient for the growth and survival of a most portentous reflective element--appropriate self-disclosure. This mutual sharing process of self-disclosure, according to Goffman (1959), begins with a delicate 'feeling-out process' whereby individuals admit their personal views and emotions to one another one at a time. Each participant drops their guard a little at a time and waits for others to demonstrate



why it may be socially and emotionally safe to continue. After mutual reassurance through other disclosures and interpersonal respect, individuals may drop their guard a little more, as was evidenced in this study. This process of gradual guarded disclosure may continue until one or more group members feel that it is inappropriate to disclosure any further.

Appropriate self-disclosure allows individuals to see through others' masks to a truer identity, their true self. Jourard (1964) metaphorically described self-disclosure as that of the "transparent self." Through a continuous interchange of self-disclosure individuals see, hear and feel the symbols presented by others. They become immersed in a continuous reciprocity of expressive acts that are simultaneously available to all who are present. In this situation, according to Berger and Luckman (1966), the other's subjectivity is emphatically 'close'. The other only becomes fully real in this type of face to face social encounter, such as in sharing circles. Immersed in the continuous, real presence of the other's expressivity, it is more difficult for all to hide their feelings as opposed to less 'close' forms of social interaction. Appropriate self-disclosure is thus a fundamental aspect of sharing circles, where individuals are encouraged to focus on and publicly express their true emotions. This activity, initially

difficult and awkward for most, can lead to empowering revelations of self and others.

#### Fears and expectations.

A form of self-disclosure, the public acknowledgement of personal fears and expectations prior to the trip is analogous to pre-reflection. Reflecting on, or pre-constructing what one imagines the trip will be like, and focusing on feelings of both anxiety and anticipation towards the trip, helps bring emotions to the surface where they can be resolved. This is important because, as demonstrated by this study, the majority of students who step into the wilderness for at least an overnight trip experience some inherent anxieties or feelings of uneasiness. Fortunately, these negative emotions are often offset by the anticipation of their forthcoming journey. However, in a group, all spectrums of emotions, from anxiousness to eager anticipation, will be present. Sharing these emotions with others has numerous benefits. Initially, it encourages individuals to risk, trust others and self-disclose. This process begins the vital cyclic process of drawing people together and facilitates interpersonal growth. Secondly, the expression of participants' fears and expectations informs the instructor of the specific expectations that each participant has. While all expectations are real, many may be unrealistic for

a specific journey. This activity, therefore, can provide an important opportunity for the leaders to discuss specific components of the trip, to increase participants' understanding of the trip, and to dispel any unrealistic expectations. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the fears and expectations exercise increases participants' sensitivity to others' needs and anxieties. As well, as evidenced through this study, many individuals are reassured and empowered to realize that their fears are not solitary and are shared by others.

#### Objective setting.

Another type of pre-reflection, the setting of objectives, is the process of identifying and declaring, individually and collectively, the personal and group objectives for a wilderness experience (Wood, 1986). Through prospective trip reflection, the setting of objectives helps students to realistically set and socially commit to personal and group objectives in line with their skills and interests. Pre-trip objective setting promotes valuable pre-trip interaction between group members. Through this exercise participants become more aware of their own and others' aspirations for the trip. Potential interpersonal conflicts are often identified and procedures for resolving disagreements maybe discussed. Additionally, setting challenging trip objectives encourages individuals

to push themselves to their growing edge, providing groups and individuals with direction and motivation to strive towards their potential. A vital element in the objective setting process is for the objectives to be derived from the participants themselves. This process provides essential personal ownership to personal and group objectives necessary for the journey's success.

#### Solo.

Solo experiences, quiet self-time apart from others, offer the most powerful form of private reflection. Severed from external constraints, habitual patterns and usual significant others, the immersion into a novel, refreshing environment provides treasured opportunities for personal introspection. Throughout this study it has become apparent that this solitary reflective process is extremely important for leaders to facilitate with large groups; plausibly more important than with smaller groups. This is because, as demonstrated through this study, larger group experiences tend to be extremely social periods and offer few naturally occurring opportunities for solitary moments of reflection.

While the social context of the journey is important, it is clear that private times for reflection are necessary to bring to light many of the meaningful components of the experience. The social setting, for example, contributes

stimulus to the reflective process by providing something more for a person to think about, but the thinking still needs to be done alone (Horwood, 1989). With this in mind, the solo, however brief during a weekend trip, forms an integral component of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model.

The solo experience may be accomplished during a large group weekend experience by scheduling quiet self-time or spontaneously taking advantage of magical natural opportunities. Often these spontaneous periods, coupled with the cooperation of the environment, provide reflective periods of humility in nature: for example, a blazing sunset sinking over a mirror lake, a misty waterfall cascading below a pine forest or a majestic moose grazing on a distant slope. These appreciated memories captured during solo opportunities are etched in the mind long after they have gone and continue to provide meaningful reflective thoughts of humility, appreciation and wonder.

For many, the solo experience is an important opportunity to slow down and simply notice, perhaps for the first time, the wonders of nature. For others, this time allows one to reflect upon the trip, the environment, oneself and others. Mortlock (1978) referred to the solo as being the most intense adventure experience. For most students, as demonstrated in this study as well as Richley's

(1992), the solo is an extremely novel ~~use~~ of focused reflection within nature's most precious gift--wilderness.

#### Metaphor.

The effective use of metaphor on a wilderness journey heightens personal awareness through the transfer of desirable qualities applicable to daily life (Hendee & Brown, 1987). The word 'metaphor' is derived from the Greek 'a transference', in the sense of transfer from one word to another; in Latin, 'metaphor' is defined as 'a carrying across'. The wilderness provides an abundance of growth opportunities, in conjunction with the application of metaphor, to transfer or carry across meanings from wilderness experiences to everyday life; to transfer knowledge, understanding and growth from one reality to the next.

The simplest and widest use of metaphor in wilderness capitalizes on individuals' successes in handling environmental and social stresses (Hendee & Brown, 1987). Optimal stimulation, via the practice of acquired skills, often demonstrates the presence of previously untapped resources and potentials that lead to positive emotions and ultimately the enhancement of self. Capitalizing on this achievement through the use of metaphor demonstrates and enhances the participants' sense of achievement. The wide



applications of metaphor include the use of planned activities that demonstrate and enhance abilities for leadership, creativity, reasoning, problem solving, communication, cooperation, teamwork, trust, and negotiation. "Metaphor provides new ways of seeing reality and the opportunity to reframe old ways of doing things" (Hendee & Brown, 1987). A valuable use of metaphor, according to Owen (1985), is that it simplifies complex or vague experiences. Metaphor re-conceptualizes abstract ideas into concrete understanding and can thus facilitate the transfer of understanding or awareness to everyday life.

Metaphor can be used most effectively during sharing circles and debriefings when students have the opportunity to reflect upon themselves, search their emotions and discuss their personal feelings with others. Hendee and Brown (1987) provided the following example: "I am like a river, with greater depth when moving steady and gentle than when rushing wide but shallow." These natural concrete images applied to self, help students to understand often abstract concepts that mold and direct behaviour and motivate effort through enhanced confidence.

Combined with metaphor, the previous methods of reflection, appropriate self-disclosure, the identification of fears and expectations, the solo experience and the



setting of objectives are effective ways in which outdoor leaders can encourage participants to increase their awareness of themselves, others and the environment. It is through this enhanced awareness that students may grow and accomplish desired alterations to self.

### Reality Transition

In the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, the triad of the self, referent other students, and leadership all interact to form an often overlooked, powerful and dynamic human environment. The meaning of this human environment differs for all participants partaking in an experience, as each objectifies and interprets it according to their own biography. This human environment, influenced by the wilderness environment and level of adventure, interacts with the reflective components of the experience to create a transition of the students' self to novel physical, social, spiritual and emotional realities. The interactions between the foregoing elements and characteristics, and subsequently construction of a new social reality in wilderness, ultimately determine the quality of the wilderness experience. The fact that it is the fundamental and most potent causality of human growth derived from a wilderness experience was learned through this study and is thus reflected in the core of Wilderness Personal Growth Model.

The core of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, therefore, is the successful transition of participants from their known, accepted and comfortable everyday life reality to the foreign reality of wilderness living and subsequently, albeit altered, back to their everyday life world.

In most situations in which people act toward objects and one another, they have previous experience and an understanding of how to act and of how others will respond. A culture shares common and pre-established meanings of objects and what is accepted and expected of peoples' actions. In such everyday life situations, individuals are able to direct their own behaviour by previously conceived meanings (Blumer, 1969). However, in novel environments, such as in wilderness for students, there are few accurate pre-established meanings toward objects. As a result, members of wilderness groups find many of their existing cultural rules, values and norms inadequate to deal with their new found situation. Groups must therefore renegotiate new cultural rules and actions that are more appropriate for the foreign physical, social and emotional environment in which they share. The social process of group life, transferred from an urban to a wilderness environment, must negotiate and uphold new rules that are specific for their situation, for it is not preconstructed rules that create and uphold group life (Blumer, 1969). The

significance of studying wilderness experience through alternating realities, as well as researching the meanings that objects provide and how these meanings are negotiated in wilderness, is substantial.

Its significance may be discovered in the meanings of symbols presented in the new wilderness social reality, a reality based upon humans interacting to symbols presented by one another while under the powerful influence of the environment, adventure level, teaching methodologies and one another. Effective ongoing reflection of these interactions can unearth further meanings and increase the quality and potency of the experience and consequently lead to greater awareness and personal growth.

### Awareness

Once students distance themselves from their everyday lives, an expanded awareness of self, other and the environment may develop, and, as previously discussed, heighten when they slow their minds and bodies long enough to allow their spirits to soar and their thoughts to wander. The wilderness, if given the opportunity, will undoubtedly provide to those who are open, a mirror with which to see reflections of their inner world (Hendee & Brown, 1987). Masks are shed, core patterns revealed, basic emotions of fears, desires and personal values are often seen with

explicit clarity, allowing participants to develop novel insights and develop new perspectives about who they really are (Hendee & Brown). Initially this increase in personal awareness is often uncomfortable; however, it is ultimately liberating and empowering as well.

The Wilderness Personal Growth Model supports Mortlock's (1978) recognition that meaningful wilderness experiences, within a framework of safety, often provide participants with deep personal and social awareness. Additionally, the Wilderness Personal Growth Model is developed to increase environmental awareness. Hence, the Wilderness Personal Growth Model advocates the following three levels of growth and recognizes the importance of their interconnectedness: (1) awareness, respect and love for self; (2) awareness, respect and love for others; (3) awareness, respect and love for the environment.

Awareness, respect and love for self.

Wilderness experiences sharpen individuals' awareness of who they really are. In our masked society, people often market an artificial personality to mislead others. In this process people are often more successful in deceiving themselves than they are in misleading others. The wilderness provides its company with the opportunity to reveal core patterns of personal behaviour, to bring forth

important personal values and emotions that mirror or reflect one's true image of self, as well as becoming aware of personal fears, drives and tendencies that surface. Constructing new meanings from new objects and recognizing one's self from a new perspective may foster and heighten self-awareness for those who are receptive to the process (Hendee & Brown, 1987). Consequently, wilderness experiences usually facilitate further self-awareness and ultimately increase people's love and respect for themselves. The stronger participants feel about themselves, the more they will be able to reach out and help others, and in so doing heighten their own feelings of self-worth.

Awareness, respect and love for others.

Fromm (1956) believed that only once an individual has developed the capacity to love his/her self that they can reach out to others. This type of 'brotherly love' involves a sense of mutual responsibility, care, respect, knowledge and a wish to further the meanings of each other's lives. By compelling students to renegotiate a fresh social reality and construct new meanings to objects, wilderness provides unique opportunities for participants to nurture their awareness, respect and love for others; here individuals are naturally encouraged to cooperate and grow together in order to ensure group members' safety, success and growth. This

process of living with and relying on others increases awareness of others' needs and frequently leads to emotions of positive affect. For example, respect for others frequently develops through the disclosure of selves in sharing circles or witnessing comrades persevere at tasks they find most arduous.

Awareness, respect and love for the environment.

The exposure to the primal influences of nature both humbles wilderness travellers and increases their sensory awareness of the environment. For example, ears that routinely block urban noise pollution usually become sensitized to the delicate sounds of a overflying hawk or the gentle babbling of a brook. Sensory awareness to nature's gifts grows, opening new doors of realization and wonder. This growth often brings inspiring meanings to objects and is usually accompanied by a greater respect for and love of the environment. Wilderness travellers soon realize that the natural world is neither for nor against them and they are but one of all interrelated species that make up the diverse and complex ecosystems of our planet. This realization, that the wilderness is unforgiving and indifferent to their survival, is initially a sobering thought. However, once individuals become more comfortable in their humbled place of nature's order, they become



inspired by the power and the beauty of the natural world (Hendee & Brown, 1987).

### Personal Growth

Through the previously discussed elements of personal, social and environmental awarenesses, individuals develop and grow. Hence, personal growth is the utilization of these new awarenesses into concrete and fundamental changes of self. This transformation may result in increases in self-concept, greater empathy and sensitivity toward others, more control over and insights into how they objectify their social reality, enhanced communication or technical skills, or a belief of deep ecological views and people's humility in nature. The Wilderness Personal Growth Model is a cyclic model, whereby this growth attained through wilderness experiences functions to generate further growth during the experience.

### Transfer of Growth

Before the termination of the outdoor event and the subsequent return to daily existence, growth attained through a wilderness experience must be transferred with the participants back to everyday life. Without this shift, much of the learning attained during the experience may be



lost. The intent of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, therefore, applies not only to the immediate wilderness endeavour, but also to the association of the experience to future issues for the participant. The true value of an outdoor programme, according to Gass (1990), exists in how learning experienced during the activity will benefit the learner in the future. In order for this relationship to occur, Katz (1973) argued that moments of awareness experienced, and subsequent growth gained, during wilderness experiences must have meaningful relationships with one's ongoing life situation. As discussed, it is through reflection that one may effectively construct meaning from such experiences.

Many practical methods used to facilitate the transfer of learning from wilderness to everyday life have been previously discussed in the Wilderness Personal Growth Model; several of these methods are also supported by Gass' (1990). In summary, these methods of transfer include: the use of student goal setting; to allow students to accept as much responsibility as possible; to allow nature to be the main teacher; through not shielding the student from real consequences of actions and, consequently, allowing for reality confrontation; the use of solos to provide self reflective time; to provide opportunities for students to internalize their learning through the use of focused

processing techniques, such as sharing circles and debriefings; and, through the use of metaphor as well as other modes of reflection, such as journal writing.

The aforementioned transfer of learning methodologies can assist students to bridge their learning and subsequent growth to their everyday lives. Without this transfer of growth, much of the utility of wilderness programmes is stored with the tents and packs when students re-enter their everyday lives. Transfer methodologies are tools that should be utilized to excite students, by showing them the future value of their current learning experiences. This empowerment can furnish one of the strongest incentives for students' continued learning (Gass, 1990).

#### Wilderness Personal Growth Model Credo

The elements of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, many gained and all supported through this study, should all contribute to a greater awareness of self, others and the environment. These new levels of awareness further personal growth and ultimately lead to developments of self. Notwithstanding, the personal meanings of the experience must be skillfully processed so the growth attained from the wilderness journey can be effectively transferred back with the students to their everyday lives.

A reader may conclude that the expectations of intra- and interpersonal growth through the use of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model are excessive, especially considering its use with large groups over a short duration. The expectations of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model are indeed high, but, so is the potential of skilled and sensitive leaders to empower students to grow through wilderness experiences to say nothing of the magical, empowering properties of wilderness. A wilderness experience is a rare gift. It is, therefore, imperative that its growth potential be realized and the fullest be made of the opportunities, however brief, each visit provides.

CHAPTER IX  
MY JOURNEY'S CREDO

This chapter provides a summary of the study, discusses its implications for wilderness leaders and proposes recommendations for further research. The summary reviews the nature and scope of the problem, the significance of the research and the research design; an overview of the findings follows. Practical implications of the research for leaders of wilderness groups are also addressed. Finally, recommendations for further research and my journey's credo are presented.

Summary

Nature and scope of the problem.

Although brief wilderness journeys accommodating large groups are not ideal, for logistical and financial reasons, they are the most realistic for, and thus most commonly practised by, the vast majority of educational institutions. Hence, the main purposes of this study were to gain a more complete understanding of the values and meanings university students ascribe to short-term weekend wilderness experiences in large groups. As well, the study sought to determine how maximum intra- and interpersonal growth may be attained through these more logistically viable weekend

trips. With this in mind, an additional purpose of this investigation was to determine if group bonding curriculum elements, such as cooperative games and programmed reflection, strengthened the intra- and interpersonal growth experienced during a brief wilderness journey. Furthermore, specific curricula and instructional content and processes that enhance this phenomena were identified. Lastly, based on this research, the Wilderness Personal Growth Model was further developed.

#### The significance of the research.

Before educational wilderness experiences can more competently serve participants to grow and self-actualize, our understanding of how these programmes work must be advanced. This study furthers this knowledge base, and, in so doing, assists practitioners in a wide variety of educational areas to help their students achieve optimal personal growth through short-term, large group, wilderness programmes. As well, due to recent financial cutbacks in education, some administrators have elected to reduce or cancel many academic wilderness programmes. The most recent example of this way of thinking is in the Province of Quebec, where it has been proposed to reduce college physical education credits by half. Most of these reductions will most likely be realized through terminating non-traditional courses, such as rock climbing, canoe

camping and other outdoor ventures. In fact, after reviewing Quebec's popular and diverse college physical education programme, Quebec's Higher Education Minister, Mme. Lucienne Robillard (1992), stated to physical education professors, "I see there are courses like ... rock climbing and map and compass reading; I have trouble with that. How do you link this with the broad health objections you strive for"? Much of this philosophy and subsequent action seems to be performed with extremely little understanding of the lifelong benefits that can be derived from wilderness experiences, however brief. These ostensibly uninformed administrative decisions demonstrate the lack of knowledge and understanding management often has toward the values of wilderness experiences. These blind judgments directly and indirectly affect the national well-being of our citizens and environmental health of our country. Thoreau, sensitive to the educational impacts and inherent values of wilderness, wrote,

I went into the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear.... I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life (Thoreau, 1990, p.60).

This research provides sceptical administrators with robust data to better assess the value, meanings, cost benefits and impacts of brief, inexpensive, and well led large group wilderness experiences. Furthermore, this research contributes to the professional field by providing outdoor practitioners with a model that is useful to further enhance the personal growth derived through their programmes.

#### Research design.

Data for this study were collected and analyzed from several perspectives. A qualitative and quantitative triangulation approach was used, including pre- and post-experience questionnaires, personal interviews, participants' journals and participant observation. Each method revealed slightly different aspects of the same phenomenon, thus enabling me to view the students' experiences from several viewpoints and better understand their experiences.

Two intact groups were quantitatively compared with pre- and post-experience questionnaires. This portion of the study attempted to determine whether specific treatment effects (such as cooperative games and programmed reflection) affected the students' levels of intra- and interpersonal growth. The qualitative portion of the



investigation explored, described and sought out the meanings the wilderness weekend experience had for the students.

### Findings.

The wilderness weekend journey was a profound and extremely meaningful experience for the students; for most it was perceived to be an inordinately significant and worthwhile event; in fact, some thought it was one of the best weekends of their lives. While the study failed to unearth many significant differences between the "enriched" and "standard" curricula groups, (the former receiving many cooperative games and reflective exercises, the latter fewer), it did determine that both groups felt significantly closer to their respective trip-mates after the weekend than before.

By examining the co-researchers' common themes we can more thoroughly understand the nature of being human and better appreciate the magnitude and influence that brief wilderness journeys have on university students. The common themes that emerged from the co-researchers, depicting the meaning of the experience, included the following:

1. Appreciation of and connectedness to the natural environment
2. Personal calming--solitude
3. Coping with the challenge
4. Heightened intrapersonal awareness
5. Perceived threats to personal well-being
6. Change in emotions
7. Disclosure of selves
8. Closeness to others through shared common experiences
9. Uncovering "real" others
10. Cooperation.

Lastly, the study provided evidence for a number of significant postulates that contributed to the development of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model.

#### Implications for Wilderness Leaders

It has become clear, that during the wilderness weekend experience, the students oscillated, to varying degrees, in and out of their socially constructed reality. The comfort the students felt in their wilderness group as well as the potency of the meaning of the experience worked together to suspend them in a socially constructed wilderness reality; for most it was a world of uncertainty, challenge, solitude, friendship and growth. But this milieu only partially

succeeded in blocking the students' visual and mental reminders of everyday life that intermittently pulled them away from their wilderness life-world. Hence, during a brief weekend wilderness journey, with the inevitable powerful distracters of everyday life, (for example automobile bridges, and academic and personal responsibilities), it is imperative for leaders to rapidly create a strong social and emotional environment that is conducive to growth and to hold students in this atmosphere for as long as possible. During the last day of a trip the "barn-door" will inevitably open and pull students away from their growth-oriented, socially constructed reality of wilderness. Students who, prior to the trip, have accomplished assignments due shortly after the trip, and who are otherwise organized for their upcoming week, are more resilient to this barn-door effect; consequently, they are better able to emotionally and socially remain in a socially constructed wilderness reality longer than students who are not adequately prepared. Students who are more prepared are better able to concentrate on the "here and now", appreciate the experience and consequently achieve greater intra- and interpersonal growth. Therefore, it is important for leaders to help students understand that wilderness trips will inevitably "disrupt" their everyday lives more than they realize and help them to schedule their other responsibilities around the trip. This preparedness will

facilitate the students' receptivity to enter the wilderness world, distance themselves from the everyday life and become more focused toward the socially constructed reality of wilderness living during the journey.

Furthermore, practitioners taking their students into a wilderness environment, must be sensitive to the rapid and powerful shift of students' socially constructed reality and the types of educational opportunities that are afforded within. Leaders must gently guide their students to re-negotiate their social reality in a way that will facilitate optimal personal growth in accordance with the trip's objectives. Empathetic leaders, aware of the potency of the contrast in realities from everyday life to wilderness and back to everyday life, will be better able to take advantage of the outdoor's dynamic educational potential and effectively guide their students through an exciting growth process.

During weekend wilderness journeys, participants are transported into a new world with its own socially negotiated meanings and order. For many individuals the reality of the wilderness world appears as an enclave from their paramount reality, the reality of their everyday lives. Their everyday life-world, a significant portion of their biographies, cannot be completely abandoned when they

venture into wilderness. Consequently, their world of everyday affairs influences the meanings they negotiate toward objects in wilderness. Hence, the negotiation of objects within this new reality is strongly influenced by the meanings of objects brought with the participants from their everyday life-world. These objectifications may or may not have much to do with their everyday life reality, but the new meanings of such objects are negotiated on the bases of meanings brought from their everyday life world. Much of this negotiated meaning experienced during a trip depends on the skill of the leaders guiding students to negotiate desired meanings prior to the trip as well as during and after the trip. It is therefore critical for leaders to help students transfer the meanings of objects discovered and negotiated during the trip back with them to everyday life. A most important duty of a wilderness leader is to assist participants to interpret the coexistence of their everyday life reality within the reality enclaves of wilderness and to help them to transfer these meanings back to everyday life.

Prior to the trip most of the students did not wish to participate on the weekend journey; most students were either anxious of the unknowns and/or resentful of the time taken from their academic and personal lives. However, after the trip virtually all of the participants felt

fortunate to have had such an experience. This shift in attitudes demonstrates that it is imperative for leaders to strongly encourage full participation in wilderness experiences; in an academic course a written assignment in lieu of the wilderness experience will not and should not suffice.

Furthermore, from a leadership perspective it is evident that the more students can identify with the components of a wilderness experience before the trip, the less anxious and more receptive they will be toward partaking in such an experience. Therefore, methodologically, leaders should make use of practical outdoor equipment sessions, skill development classes, lectures from past students (including slides of previous trips) and periods promoting experiential group team-building. One of the most empowering components of the wilderness trip is the unexpected re-negotiation of a group's social reality, the assignment of new meanings toward familiar objects and the discovery of new objects. It is therefore essential to note that during the pre-trip preparations leaders should not attempt to tell students what positive feelings they should have during and after the experience, nor what might happen to the social context of the group. It is critical that students make these discoveries on their own, and, in the unlikely event that

the experience does not create robust meaning for them, they do not leave disappointed, wondering why they couldn't "make it happen." The unexpectedness of the intra- and interpersonal growth attained during a wilderness experience leads to further and more meaningful growth. Therefore leaders should paint a realistic picture of the objective components of the trip while revealing little of the subjective elements or affective domain.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

To date, there has been extremely little qualitative or quantitative research conducted on brief wilderness experiences with large groups. Therefore, keeping in mind its potential popularity and effectiveness, the need for study in this area is tremendous. In light of this vacuum of knowledge, I propose the following recommendations for further research:

1. This study could be replicated to furnish another perspective on the phenomenon of wilderness weekend group journeys. Additionally, different modes of travel, such as hiking, could be used, as well as different data generation techniques and descriptive methods. These trip and research variations may demonstrate whether this study's common



themes of weekend wilderness excursions range across other groups, programmes and environments.

2. The Wilderness Personal Growth Model needs to be applied to various wilderness groups differing in size and/or age. For example, two wilderness groups of different sizes, under the same leadership and applying the methodologies of the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, could be compared. Similarly, it would be useful to study and compare groups of teens, young adults, middle aged and older participants and determine how these groups conceptualize their experiences. The Wilderness Personal Growth Model could then be adapted to meet the needs of each group. Furthermore, it would be useful to compare groups of different skill levels and unearth the meanings that they ascribe to their experiences.

3. Comparisons of different trip lengths need to be accomplished in order to determine optimal trip duration in the attainment of maximal growth. Similar groups with the same leadership and methodologies may be compared which have participated in three-day, one-week and two-week programmes. Interpersonal relations as well as individual meanings of the trip may be studied.

4. More groups, with the same leadership style but different trip objectives and trip types (such as variations

in levels of adventure or distance travelled per day), need to be studied.

5. Longer term research needs to be conducted to determine the longitudinal intra- and interpersonal effects of weekend trips. For example, data could be generated immediately preceding and after a wilderness experience as well as two to three years after the trip. Participants could be questioned about the social and personal long term effects the wilderness journey had on them. Themes for each time frame could be generated and compared.

6. In all studies where data are collected quantitatively, a greater number of subjects should be required for increased statistical power; additionally, tighter controls for internal validity would need to be exercised. However it must be noted that the internal validity of true field investigations is extremely difficult to determine.

### Credo

This thesis illustrates the value of brief wilderness trips with large groups and demonstrates the profound effects they can have on participants. The study can be employed by administrators and educators to understand more fully the short-term wilderness experiences accommodating

large groups. Through this increased comprehension and the teaching methods outlined in the Wilderness Personal Growth Model, wilderness leaders can now develop stronger wilderness programmes that will more effectively enhance the personal growth of their students. While, due to the short duration of weekend trips, students views of wilderness may be fashioned by an unrealistic conclusions, this partial view can and did produce positive results. This limited picture does not detract from the experience, but, to complete the picture and come into further contact with realities of wilderness, students should have more in-depth experiences.

As I conclude this journey I can't help reflecting back upon where I have travelled; like the students partaking on the weekend trips, I too have changed and grown in the process. This project has brought me closer to my students; I am now more vigilant towards understanding their journeys from their perspectives and am more sensitive towards what is most meaningful to them. This journey has led me to believe that, while I was on the right track years ago, much more growth can be accomplished through thoughtful, empathic teaching and appropriate methodologies. With my teaching methodologies and skills refined, and by learning to remain more sensitive and open to students' objectifications and renegotiation of their social reality in wilderness, I am

yenthusiastic that I can continue to have a positive impact upon my students and colleagues; and, through this growth process, I am excited to continue my personal journey over the enduring path of the ever elusive, total, self-actualization.

Wilderness is my sanctuary--my trip-companions are my inspiration. Together, their value to me is far greater than the sum of their parts. Living the vitality of wilderness, (cool air, invigorating streams, fresh aromas, wind, delicate pastel colours, sun, rain--a celebration of life), while sharing my being with humans brings remarkable meaning into my life; its union compels me to feel whole--to appreciate and love life. Administrators of education and wilderness leaders have a moral and ethical responsibility to society and to the Earth to help young people travel this path towards experiencing and realizing the empowering growth potentials of wilderness.

This journey draws to a close; and, as on a wilderness trip, the culmination of a meaningful day is signalled as the fire turns to embers and the embers to ashes; but the meanings and the memories of both experiences will glow forever.

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## APPENDIX A

## INFORMED CONSENT

Investigator : Tom Potter  
Telephone: : 492-5503

It is vital for us to understand what aspects of our PESS 180 weekend canoe trip are helping students to effectively assimilate their outdoor knowledge and increase their outdoor skill level. Identifying specific course elements that facilitate your maximal enjoyment and learning during the course will help us to improve the PESS 180 experience for future students. We are therefore carrying out a study to determine how you see yourselves changing as a result of this course. Your assistance and cooperation in this important project is vital if we are to achieve our goal.

I will be collecting this data. The results will in no way be used in the grading of this course. I will not be involved in the lab evaluations in any way what so ever. The information collected from you will be in complete confidence. Only I will see the individual results. In addition, the results and conclusions of the study will remain in my sole possession and under strict confidence until the winter term, well after the PESS 180 marks have been posted.

All information provided by you will remain confidential and your identity remain unknown to us since all questionnaires, journals and interviews will be coded, eliminating any need for names.

With this anonymity and complete detachment of course grades from the study we sincerely hope that you will participate honestly and openly. Your involvement in this project is completely voluntary and allows you to decline to enter or withdraw at any time without consequences.

Such a commitment from you will involve completing a ten (10) minute questionnaire prior to your weekend trip and a fifteen (15) minute questionnaire at the end of your weekend canoe trip. As well, you will be expected to keep an open and honest personal log about your experience during the canoe trip. I will also be joining you on your canoe trip to better understand your experience.

The completed questionnaires, the personal log, interviews and my experience with you will enable us to understand the impact of outdoor labs and weekend trips on university students, and, will ultimately be used to improve the PESS 180 experience for future students. As well, I will be using



your feedback in my Ph.D. dissertation to help outdoor practitioners in Canada develop more powerful and successful outdoor programmes. Most importantly your involvement in this project will help you to reflect on your personal needs, expectations and objectives as a person, physical educator and perhaps as an outdoor leader.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions about the procedures of the study.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

With sincere and grateful appreciation,

Tom Potter

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INFORMED CONSENT

I have read this form and I understand the extent of my involvement in the study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this project at any time without repercussions. I freely consent to participate in this research and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form.

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Tom Potter

## APPENDIX B

## PRE AND POST-TRIP QUESTIONNAIRES

## PRE-TRIP QUESTIONNAIRE

Last four digits of your student number: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex : \_\_\_\_\_

Year : \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions as honestly and with as much depth as possible. Complete confidentiality is assured. Only Tom Potter will see your responses. Results of the study will remain in the sole possession of Tom well after the final grades for this course have been posted. Please take your time to carefully complete this questionnaire. Thank you in advance for your assistance, sincerity and honesty.

1. To what degree are you looking forward to this trip?  
Please circle one.

|        |          |          |            |      |           |
|--------|----------|----------|------------|------|-----------|
| 1      | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5    | 6         |
| NOT    | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | VERY | EXTREMELY |
| AT ALL |          |          |            |      |           |

Why and/or why not?

2. Please list your expectations for the upcoming canoe trip?

A.

B.

C.

3. Please list your motives or reasons for partaking in this trip.

A.

B.

C.

4. Please rate your level of concern or anxiety about the upcoming weekend trip. Circle one number.

|            |          |          |            |      |           |
|------------|----------|----------|------------|------|-----------|
| 1          | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5    | 6         |
| NOT AT ALL | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | VERY | EXTREMELY |
| ANXIOUS    |          |          |            |      | ANXIOUS   |

5. Please list your concerns and/or anxieties, however minor, about the upcoming trip.

A.

B.

C.

6. Please list three personal objectives you may have for the trip. These objectives should be personally challenging, realistic and obtainable during your canoe trip (ex: light a fire, stay warm).

A.

B.

C.

7. How close do you feel towards the members of your Lab group? Circle one.

|           |          |          |            |       |           |
|-----------|----------|----------|------------|-------|-----------|
| 1         | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5     | 6         |
| NOT CLOSE | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | VERY  | EXTREMELY |
| AT ALL    | CLOSE    | CLOSE    | CLOSE      | CLOSE | CLOSE     |
| CLOSE     |          |          |            |       |           |

8. How close do you feel towards the members of your Tent group? Circle one.

|           |          |          |            |         |           |
|-----------|----------|----------|------------|---------|-----------|
| 1         | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5       | 6         |
| NOT CLOSE | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | LARGELY | EXTREMELY |
| AT ALL    | CLOSE    | CLOSE    | CLOSE      | CLOSE   | CLOSE     |

Thank you kindly for your time and assistance. I look forward to sharing the upcoming trip with you. Enjoy!

## POST-TRIP QUESTIONNAIRE

Last four digits of your student number: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex : \_\_\_\_\_

Year : \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions as honestly and with as much depth as possible. Complete confidentiality is assured. Only Tom Potter will see your responses. Results of the study will remain in the sole possession of Tom well after the final grades for this course have been posted.

Please take your time to carefully complete this questionnaire. Once again, thank you for your assistance, sincerity and honesty.

9. How meaningful was this trip for you? Circle one.

|            |          |          |            |      |            |
|------------|----------|----------|------------|------|------------|
| 1          | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5    | 6          |
| NOT        | SLIGHTLY | A LITTLE | MODERATELY | VERY | EXTREMELY  |
| MEANINGFUL |          |          |            |      | MEANINGFUL |

Why or why not?

What was most meaningful for you? Please be specific.

10. How challenging did you find the trip? Please circle one.

|             |          |          |            |      |             |
|-------------|----------|----------|------------|------|-------------|
| 1           | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5    | 6           |
| NOT         | SLIGHTLY | A LITTLE | MODERATELY | VERY | EXTREMELY   |
| CHALLENGING |          |          |            |      | CHALLENGING |

Why or why not? Please give specific examples.

11. Has the WEEKEND CAMPING TRIP brought you closer to your classmates? Use the scale and circle one.

|        |          |          |            |      |           |
|--------|----------|----------|------------|------|-----------|
| 1      | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5    | 6         |
| NOT AT | SLIGHTLY | A LITTLE | MODERATELY | MUCH | EXTREMELY |
| ALL    | CLOSER   |          |            |      | CLOSER    |

Why or why not?

HOW YOU SEE YOUR GROUP

Use the rating scale of one through six and circle one digit. Provide a brief reason for each.

12. How functional was your Lab group in coordinating and cooperating to achieve its tasks? Circle one.

|            |          |          |            |         |            |
|------------|----------|----------|------------|---------|------------|
| 1          | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5       | 6          |
| NOT        | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | LARGELY | EXTREMELY  |
| FUNCTIONAL |          |          |            |         | FUNCTIONAL |

Why or why not:

13. Overall, how effective was your TENT group in coordinating and cooperating to carrying out its basic tasks of setting up camp, cooking, etc...? Circle one.

|           |          |          |            |         |           |
|-----------|----------|----------|------------|---------|-----------|
| 1         | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5       | 6         |
| NOT       | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | LARGELY | EXTREMELY |
| EFFECTIVE |          |          |            |         | EFFECTIVE |

Why or why not:

14. How close do you feel towards the members of your Lab group? Circle one.

|           |          |          |            |      |           |
|-----------|----------|----------|------------|------|-----------|
| 1         | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5    | 6         |
| NOT CLOSE | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | VERY | EXTREMELY |
| AT ALL    |          |          |            |      | CLOSE     |

Why or why not?



15. How close do you feel towards the members of your tent group? Circle one.

|                     |          |          |            |         |                    |
|---------------------|----------|----------|------------|---------|--------------------|
| 1                   | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5       | 6                  |
| NOT CLOSE<br>AT ALL | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | LARGELY | EXTREMELY<br>CLOSE |

Why or why not?

16. If you had the chance to move to another Lab group, how would you feel about moving? Circle one.

|          |               |       |                  |      |           |
|----------|---------------|-------|------------------|------|-----------|
| 1        | 2             | 3     | 4                | 5    | 6         |
| TERRIBLE | VERY<br>BADLY | BADLY | WOULDN'T<br>CARE | GOOD | EXCELLENT |

Why?

17. How much closer do you feel towards the members of your tent group than before the trip? Circle one.

|                      |          |          |            |         |                     |
|----------------------|----------|----------|------------|---------|---------------------|
| 1                    | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5       | 6                   |
| NOT CLOSER<br>AT ALL | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | LARGELY | EXTREMELY<br>CLOSER |

Why or why not?

HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF

Rate yourself on the following descriptions. Use the rating scale of one through six, and circle one of the digits.

18. Have you changed as a result of participating in this trip? Circle one.

|        |          |          |            |         |              |
|--------|----------|----------|------------|---------|--------------|
| 1      | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5       | 6            |
| NOT    | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | LARGELY | TREMENDOUSLY |
| AT ALL |          |          |            |         |              |

In what ways? Please be specific.

19. Did you enjoy the trip? Circle one.

|        |          |          |            |         |              |
|--------|----------|----------|------------|---------|--------------|
| 1      | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5       | 6            |
| NOT    | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | LARGELY | TREMENDOUSLY |
| AT ALL |          |          |            |         |              |

Identify the high points. Be specific.

Identify the low points.

20. Did the trip meet your expectations? Why or why not?

|        |          |          |            |         |              |
|--------|----------|----------|------------|---------|--------------|
| 1      | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5       | 6            |
| NOT    | SLIGHTLY | SOMEWHAT | MODERATELY | LARGELY | TREMENDOUSLY |
| AT ALL |          |          |            |         |              |

Why or why not?

21. The purpose of this part of the questionnaire is to determine what elements of the WEEKEND CAMPING TRIP contributed the most to your learning, enjoyment and personal growth. Using the following scale please rate the elements on how helpful they were in helping you learn more about yourself and others. Provide a brief reason for each. Please be specific. Write the corresponding numbers on the line beside the element. Please use whole numbers only: no 1/2 or 1/4 numbers.

|              |        |      |          |              |       |
|--------------|--------|------|----------|--------------|-------|
| 1            | 2      | 3    | 4        | 5            | 6     |
| NO           | LITTLE | SOME | MODERATE | LARGE        | GREAT |
| CONTRIBUTION |        |      |          | CONTRIBUTION |       |

| DESCRIPTION                                              | RATING |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Evening cooperative games                             | _____  |
| 2. Evening campfire games                                | _____  |
| 3. Free campfire time                                    | _____  |
| 4. Being independent and responsible for self and others | _____  |
| 5. Having to trust and rely on peers                     | _____  |
| 6. Closing Circle (Sunday afternoon)                     | _____  |
| 7. Thought for the Day (Sunday morning)                  | _____  |
| 8. Meal time with tent group                             | _____  |
| 9. Canoeing on the River                                 | _____  |
| 10. Rest Stops on the River (rafting up)                 | _____  |
| 11. Peer presentations                                   | _____  |
| 12. Free camp fire time                                  | _____  |
| 13. Group Debriefing(s)                                  | _____  |
| 14. Characteristics and Attitudes of Leaders             | _____  |
| 15. Mini-Solo (Sunday afternoon)                         | _____  |
| 16. Idle Time                                            | _____  |
| 17. Setting Up and Breaking Camp                         | _____  |

(Question #21 continued)

|              |        |      |          |              |       |
|--------------|--------|------|----------|--------------|-------|
| 1            | 2      | 3    | 4        | 5            | 6     |
| NO           | LITTLE | SOME | MODERATE | LARGE        | GREAT |
| CONTRIBUTION |        |      |          | CONTRIBUTION |       |

| DESCRIPTION                                            | RATING |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 18. Fears and Expectations Session<br>(Friday evening) | _____  |
| 19. Setting of Objectives                              | _____  |
| 20. Blindfold Canoeing                                 | _____  |
| 21 Canoeing into the wind                              | _____  |

Once again, thank you for your time and effort.

## APPENDIX C

## PERSONAL JOURNAL QUESTIONS

In order that we may learn from your weekend experience, an accurate record of your thoughts, feelings and concerns is vital. In addition, your journal should help you to become more aware of interactions taking place between the environment, programme elements, the group and yourself. Your journal is private and must NOT be shared. It will ONLY be seen by Tom Potter. If you desire, place your telephone number on the front of your log book and it will be returned to you during the second semester.

A field journal is a personal account of your weekend journey. You are free to include whatever you wish, including drawings or poems, etc. In addition, however, I would appreciate your attention to answering the following questions listed below. Feel free to make field journal entries as frequently as possible. Often important emotions of even a few hours old, if not recorded, are lost. Point form is acceptable and often desirable. "Self-time" will be made for you at the end of each day to thoughtfully reflect upon the day and record your feelings in a sincere and honest manner. The importance of your honesty and sincerity cannot be overstated. Your journal will be collected by Tom at the end of the trip.

Please respond briefly to the following questions each day. It is vital that you indicate the day (Fri., Sat. or Sun) and the question number of each response.

1. How was your day? Please elaborate.
  2. What was most meaningful for you today?
  3. How do you feel as an individual today?
  4. Is this what you expected from the trip?
  5. What have you learned about yourself today?
  6. What have you learned about others today?
  7. How well has your tent group functioned as a team?  
Please elaborate on the strengths demonstrated and the difficulties experienced by your group.
  8. A) How do you feel about members of your LAB group?  
B) How do you feel about members of your TENT group?
  9. How do you feel as part of your LAB group today?
- Thank you in advance for your time, effort and cooperation.  
Your participation in this study is GREATLY APPRECIATED.

## APPENDIX D

## DESCRIPTION OF THE JOURNEYS' ACTIVITIES

A) Incorporation - Leader calls participants to get into groups based on elements such as same eye colour, same sock colour, same number of brothers and sisters, etcetera. Once in smaller groups individuals must share something, such as their favourite ice-cream or what they did last summer with their respective group members. The process is then repeated.

B) Sculpture - Activity takes place in groups of threes with one person blindfolded. One of the non-blindfolded persons gets into a static pose; the other participant, with sight, stands a few feet away. The blind-folded person must get the standing person into the identical position of the person posing.

C) Group Sit - Group forms a tight circle and all turn to their right. Standing front to back of one another, participants all simultaneously sit down on the person's lap behind them. This position should be held.

D) Birthday Line Up - Without talking participants line up in order according to their birth-dates.

E) Elves, Giants and Wizards - Two teams facing each other along parallel lines spaced ten feet apart. The groups, having each conversed with their members, simultaneously call out either "Elves", "Giants" or "Wizards". Like the game "rock, scissors, paper", whichever call is dominate wins, but only if the "submissive" participants can be caught before they turn and run to a safety zone 30 feet behind their forward line.

F) Cosmic - In groups of six, each group decides on a group action and accompanying sound. All groups are then instructed to perform at once. Each group then privately consults with its members as to which action and noise they will perform, selecting only from those previously dramatised. Then once again all groups perform at once. This continues, with consulting breaks in between, until all groups perform the same action and noise at the same time.

G) Sardines - Within defined boundaries, one person hides. Group members, alone or in pairs, go out to find the hidden person. When they find the hiding individual they quietly squish together with the hidden person and hide from the others as well. The number of hidden participants grows until all are in one human mass.

## APPENDIX E

## ENRICHED GROUP'S TRIP DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Friday, September 27, 1991:

High 17, mostly sunny, clear during night

- 16:00 Mustered at the University of Alberta Campus Outdoor Centre
- 16:45 Depart
- 17:40 Arrive at Genesee bridge and unload canoes
- 18:15 Ferry across the North Saskatchewan River to camp site
- 18:30 Tents pitched and dinner made
- 19:45 Group gathers around fire for group activities, sharing circle, concerns and expectations session, presentation and reading
- 23:00 Students turn in for bed

Saturday, September 28, 1992:

High 15, Low -1, Scattered showers and light winds

- 7:15 "Rise and shine!"  
Breakfast and break camp
- 9:00 Group meets for two cooperative games two presentations
- 10:45 Depart down river in canoes
- 12:30 Lunch and two presentations
- 14:00 Depart
- 17:30 Camp site attained  
Tents pitched and dinner made
- 19:00 Party divided into three groups for initiative games
- 21:00 Group initiative game (sardines)  
Sharing circle  
Camp fire: Organized games  
Free camp fire time
- 23:30 + Individuals retire to bed



Sunday, September 29, 1992:

High 14, Low -1, Morning frost, sunny with cloudy periods.  
Moderate wind during morning and late afternoon. Heavy  
winds during the mid-day.

|       |                                                                                     |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:00  | "Rise and Shine!"<br>Breakfast and break camp                                       |
| 9:00  | Group game and presentation                                                         |
| 10:00 | On the river<br>Blind-fold paddle with sharing circle<br>Paddle through fierce wind |
| 13:15 | Lunch                                                                               |
| 13:45 | Solo                                                                                |
| 14:30 | Search for lost student                                                             |
| 15:00 | Closing circle                                                                      |
| 15:30 | Back on the river                                                                   |
| 18:15 | Quesnel bridge - End of trip                                                        |

## APPENDIX F

## SUMMARY OF BOTH GROUPS' JOURNEYS

|           | STANDARD                                   | ENRICHED                                                                                                                    |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday:   | Introductions<br>Robert Service<br>reading | Introductions<br>Ice-breakers<br>Cooperative games<br>Fears and expectations<br>Sharing circle<br>Robert Service<br>reading |
| Saturday: | Campfire games                             | Cooperative games<br>Partner sharing<br>Campfire games<br>Cooperative games<br>Campfire games<br>Share circle<br>Debriefing |
| Sunday:   | Closing circle                             | Thought for day<br>Blindfold canoeing<br>Share circle<br>Wind<br>Mini-solo<br>Closing circle                                |
| Overall:  | Much tent group<br>time<br>More free time  | Much whole group time<br>Cooperative games<br>Little free time<br>Encouraged self-disclosure                                |